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DAVID COPPERFIELD

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DAVID COPPERFIELD

CHAPTER I

I was born at Blunderstone, in Suffolk, in a house called the Rookery. I was a posthumous child. My father's eyes had closed upon the light of this world six months when mine opened on it.

An aunt of my father's, and consequently a great-aunt of mine, was the principal magnate of our family. Miss Trotwood, or Miss Betsey, as my poor mother always called her, when she sufficiently overcame her dread of this formidable personage to mention her at all (which was seldom), had been married to a husband younger than herself. He was strongly suspected of having beaten Miss Betsey, and even of having once made some hasty but determined arrangements to throw her out of a two pair of stairs' window. These evidences of an incompatibility of temper induced Miss Betsey to pay him off, and effect a separation by mutual consent. Immediately upon the separation she took her maiden name again, bought a cottage in a hamlet on the sea-coast a long way off, established herself there as a single woman, with one

servant, and was understood to live secluded, ever afterwards, in an inflexible retirement.

My father had once been a favourite of hers, I believe; but she was mortally affronted by his marriage, on the ground that my mother was "a wax doll." She had not seen my mother, but she knew her to be not yet twenty. My father and Miss Betsey never met again. He was double my mother's age when he married, and of a delicate constitution. He died a year afterwards, and, as I have said, six months before I came into the world.

Miss Betsey came to see my mother just before her first confinement, and very kindly offered to adopt the child she was expecting. Miss Betsey had hoped that it would be a girl, and as soon as she was informed that my mother had given birth to a boy, she left our house in a huff, and never came back.

The first objects that assume a distinct presence before me, as I look far back into the blank of my infancy, are my mother with her pretty hair and youthful shape, and Peggotty with no shape at all.

There comes, out of the cloud, our house. On the ground-floor is Peggotty's kitchen, opening into a back yard; with a pigeon-house on a pole, in the centre, without any pigeons in it; a great dog-

kennel in a corner, without any dog; and a quantity of fowls that look terribly-tall to me, walking about in a menacing and ferocious manner.

Here is a long passage—what an enormous perspective I make of it!—leading from Peggotty's kitchen to the front door. A dark store-room opens out of it. Then there are the two parlours; the parlour in which we sit of an evening, my mother and I and Peggotty—for Peggotty is quite our companion, when her work is done and we are alone—and the best parlour where we sit on a Sunday; grandly, but not so comfortably.

And now I see the outside of our house, with the latticed bedroom windows standing open to let in the sweet-smelling air, and the ragged old rooks'-nests dangling in the elm-trees at the bottom of the front garden.

That is among my earliest impressions.

Peggotty and I were sitting one night by the parlour fire, alone. I had been reading to Peggotty about crocodiles. When we had exhausted the crocodiles, and begun with the alligators, the garden-bell rang. We went out to the door; and there was my mother, and with her a gentleman with beautiful black hair and whiskers, who had walked home with us from church last Sunday.

He patted me on the head; but somehow, I didn't like him or his deep voice, and I was jealous

that his hand should touch my mother's in touching me—which it did. I put it away as well as I could.

Whether it was the following Sunday when I saw the gentleman again, or whether there was any greater lapse of time before he re-appeared, I cannot recall.

Gradually, I became used to seeing the gentleman with the black whiskers whose name, I learnt, was Mr. Edward Murdstone. (I liked him no better than at first, and had the same uneasy jealousy of him.)

I was sitting quietly one evening (when my mother was out) with Peggotty, when she, after looking at me several times, said coaxingly:

“ Master Davy, how should you like to go along with me and spend a fortnight at my brother's at Yarmouth? Wouldn't *that* be a treat? ”

“ Is your brother an agreeable man, Peggotty? ” I inquired, provisionally.

“ Oh, what an agreeable man he is! ” cried Peggotty, holding up her hands. “ Then there's the sea; and the boats and ships; and the fishermen; and the beach; and Am to play with——”

Peggotty meant her nephew Ham.

I was flushed by her summary of delights, and replied that it would indeed be a treat, but what would my mother say?

“ Why then I’ll as good as bet a guinea,” said Peggotty, intent upon my face, “ that she’ll let us go. I’ll ask her, if you like, as soon as ever she comes home. There now! ”

“ But what’s she to do while we are away? ” said I, putting my small elbows on the table to argue the point. “ She can’t live by herself.”

“ Oh bless you! ” said Peggotty, looking at me again. “ Don’t you know? She’s going to stay for a fortnight with Mrs. Grayper. Mrs. Grayper’s going to have a lot of company.”

Oh! If that was it, I was quite ready to go. I waited, in the utmost impatience, until my mother came home from Mrs. Grayper’s (for it was that identical neighbour), to ascertain if we could get leave to carry out this great idea. Without being nearly so much surprised as I expected, my mother entered into it readily; and it was all arranged that night, and my board and lodging during the visit were to be paid for.

The day soon came for our going. We were to go in a carrier’s cart, which, departed in the morning after breakfast.

I am glad to recollect that when the carrier began to move, my mother ran out at the gate, and called, to him to stop, that she might kiss me.

As we left her standing in the road, Mr. Murdstone came up to where she was, and seemed to expostulate with her for being so moved.

CHAPTER II

We made so many deviations up and down lanes, that I was quite tired, and very glad, when we saw Yarmouth. It looked rather spongy and soppy, I thought, as I carried my eye over the great dull waste that lay across the river.

We got into the street (which was strange enough to me), and smelt the fish, and pitch, and oakum, and tar, and saw the sailors walking about, and the carts jingling up and down over the stones.

“Here’s my Am!” screamed Peggotty, “grewed out of knowledge!”

He was waiting for us, in fact, at the public-house—a huge, strong fellow of six feet high, broad in proportion, and round-shouldered; but with a simpering boy’s face and curly light hair that gave him quite a sheepish look. He was dressed in a canvas jacket, and a pair of very stiff trousers.

Ham carrying me on his back and a small box of ours under his arm, and Peggotty carrying another small box of ours, we turned down lanes bestrewn with bits of chips and little hillocks of sand, and went past gas-works, rope-walks, boat-

builders' yards, ship-wrights' yards, ship-breakers' yards, caulkers' yards, riggers' lofts, smiths' forges, and a great litter of such places, until we came out upon the dull waste I had already seen at a distance when Ham said :

“ Yon's our house, Mas'r Davy ! ”

I looked in all directions, as far as I could stare over the wilderness, and away at the sea, and away at the river, but no house could I make out. There was a black barge, or some other kind of superannuated boat, not far off, high and dry on the ground, with an iron funnel sticking out of it for a chimney and smoking very cosily; but nothing else in the way of a habitation that was visible to *me*.

“ That's not it ? ” said I. “ That ship-looking thing ? ”

“ That's it, Mas'r Davy,” returned Ham.

(If it had been Aladdin's palace, roc's egg and all, I suppose I could not have been more charmed with the romantic idea of living in it.) There was a delightful door cut in the side, and it was roofed in, and there were little windows in it; but the wonderful charm of it was, that it was a real boat which had no doubt been upon the water hundreds of times, and which had never been intended to be lived in, on dry land.

It was beautifully clean inside, and as tidy as possible. There was a table, and a Dutch clock,

and a chest of drawers, and on the chest of drawers there was a tea-tray with a painting on it. There were some hooks in the beams of the ceiling, the use of which I did not divine then; and some lockers and boxes and conveniences of that sort, which served for seats and eked out the chairs.

All this I saw in the first glance after I crossed the threshold, and then Peggotty opened a little door and showed me my bedroom. It was the completest and most desirable bedroom ever seen—in the stern of the vessel; with a little window, where the rudder used to go through; a little looking-glass, just the right height for me, nailed against the wall, and framed with oyster-shells; a little bed, which there was just room enough to get into; and a nosegay of seaweed in a blue mug on the table. The walls were whitewashed as white as milk, and the patchwork counterpane made my eyes quite ache with its brightness.

We were welcomed by a very civil woman (Mrs. Gummidge) in a white apron, whom I had seen curtsying at the door when I was on Ham's back, about a quarter of a mile off. Likewise by a most beautiful little girl (Emily), with a necklace of blue beads on, who ran away and hid herself. By and by, when we had dined in a sumptuous manner off boiled dabs, melted butter, and potatoes, with a chop for me, a hairy man with a very good

natured face came home. As he called Peggotty "Lass," and gave her a hearty smack on the cheek, I had no doubt he was her brother, and so he turned out—being presently introduced to me as Mr. Peggotty, the master of the house.

∴ "Glad to see you, sir," said Mr. Peggotty. 'You'll find us rough, sir, but you'll find us ready.'

I thanked him, and replied that I was sure I should be happy in such a delightful place.

✓After tea, when the door was shut and all was made snug (the nights being cold and misty now), it seemed to me the most delicious retreat that the imagination of man could conceive.

Peggotty informed me that Ham and Em'ly were an orphan nephew and niece, whom my host had at different times adopted in their childhood, when they were left destitute; and that Mrs. Gummidge was the widow of his partner in a boat, who had died very poor. (He was but a poor bachelor himself, said Peggotty, but as good as gold and as true as steel—those were her similes.)

I was very sensible of my entertainer's goodness, and listened to the women's going to bed in another little crib like mine at the opposite end of the boat, and to him and Ham hanging up two hammocks for themselves on the hooks I had noticed in the roof, in a very luxurious state of mind,

enhanced by my being sleepy. As slumber gradually stole upon me, I heard the wind howling out at sea and coming on across the flat so fiercely, that I had a lazy apprehensions of the great deep rising in the night.

Almost as soon as the morning shone upon the oyster-shell frame of my mirror I was out of bed, and out with little Em'ly, picking up stones upon the beach.

So the fortnight slipped away.

At last the day came for going home. I bore up against the separation from Mr. Peggotty and Mrs. Gummidge, but my agony of mind at leaving little Em'ly was piercing. We went arm-in-arm to the public-house where the carrier put up, and I promised, on the road, to write to her.

CHAPTER III

Now, all the time I had been on my visit, I had been ungrateful to my home and had thought little or nothing about it. But I no sooner turned towards it, than my reproachful young conscience seemed to point that way with a steady finger; and I felt, all the more for the sinking of my spirits, that it was my nest, and that my mother was my comforter and friend.

This gained upon me as we went along; so that the nearer we drew, and the more familiar the objects became that we passed, the more excited I was to get there, and to run into her arms. But Peggotty, instead of sharing in these transports, tried to check them (though very kindly), and looked confused and out of sorts.

Blunderstone Rookery would come, however, in spite of her.

The door opened, and I looked, half laughing and half crying in my pleasant agitation, for my mother. It was not she, but a strange servant.

"Why, Peggotty!" I said, ruefully, "isn't she come home?"

"Yes, yes, Master Davy," said Peggotty. "She's come home. Wait a bit, Master Davy, and I'll—I'll tell you something."

When she had got down, she took me by the hand; led me, wondering, into the kitchen; and shut the door.

"Peggotty!" said I, quite frightened. "What's the matter?"

"Nothing's the matter, bless you, Master Davy dear!" she answered, assuming an air of sprightliness.

"You see, dear, I should have told you before now," said Peggotty, "but I hadn't an opportunity. I ought to have made it, perhaps, but I

couldn't azackly"—that was always the substitute for *exactly*, in Peggotty's militia of words—"bring my mind to it."

"Go on, Peggotty," said I, more frightened than before.

"Master Davy," said Peggotty, untying her bonnet with a shaking hand, and speaking in a breathless sort of way. "What do you think? You have got a Pa!"

I trembled, and turned white. (Something—I don't know what, or how—connected with the grave in the churchyard, and the raising of the dead, seemed to strike me like an unwholesome wind.)

"A new one," said Peggotty.

"A new one?" I repeated.

Peggotty gave a gasp, as if she were swallowing something that was very hard, and, putting out her hand, said:

"Come and see him."

"I don't want to see him."

—"And your mama," said Peggotty.

I ceased to draw back, and we went straight to the best parlour, where she left me. On one side of the fire, sat my mother; on the other, Mr. Murdstone. My mother dropped her work, and arose hurriedly, but timidly, I thought.

"Now, Clara my dear," said Mr. Murdstone.

“Recollect! control yourself, always control yourself! Davy boy, how do you do?”

I gave him my hand. After a moment of suspense, I went and kissed my mother: she kissed me, patted me gently on the shoulder, and sat down again to her work. I could not look at her, I could not look at him, I knew quite well that he **was** looking at us both; and I turned to the window and looked out there at some shrubs that were drooping their heads in the cold.

As soon as I could creep away, I crept upstairs.

(If the room to which my bed was removed were a sentient thing that could give evidence, I might appeal to it at this day to bear witness for me what a heavy heart I carried to it.) I went up there, sat down with my small hands crossed, and thought.

I thought of the oddest things. Of the shape of the room, of the cracks in the ceiling, of the paper on the wall, of the flaws in the window-glass making ripples and dimples on the prospect, of the washing-stand being rickety on its three legs, and having a discontented something about it. I was crying all the time, and I rolled myself up in a corner of the counterpane, and cried myself to sleep.

I was awakened by somebody saying “Here he is!” and uncovering my hot head. My mother

and Peggotty had come to look for me, and it was one of them who had done it.

"Davy," said my mother. "What's the matter?"

I thought it was very strange that she should ask me, and answered, "Nothing." I turned over on my face, I recollect, to hide my trembling lip, which answered her with greater truth.

"Davy," said my mother. "Davy, my child!"

I dare say no words she could have uttered would have affected me so much, then, as her calling me her child. I hid my tears in the bed-clothes, and pressed her from me with my hand, when she would have raised me up.

"This is your doing, Peggotty, you cruel thing!" said my mother. "I have no doubt at all about it. (How can you reconcile it to your conscience, I wonder, to prejudice my own boy against me, or against anybody who is dear to me?) What do you mean by it, Peggotty?"

Poor Peggotty lifted up her hands and eyes, and only answered, in a sort of paraphrase of the grace I usually repeated after dinner, "Lord forgive you, Mrs. Copperfield, and for what you have said this minute, may you never be truly sorry!"

I felt the touch of a hand that I knew was neither hers nor Peggotty's, and slipped to my feet,

at the bed-side. It was Mr. Murdstone's hand, and he kept it on my arm as he said :

"What's this? Clara, my love, have you forgotten?—Firmness, my dear!"

"I am very sorry, Edward," said my mother. "I meant to be very good, but I am so uncomfortable."

"Go you below, my love," said Mr. Murdstone. "David and I will come down, together. My friend," turning a darkening face on Peggotty, when he had watched my mother out, and dismissed her with a nod and a smile; "do you know your mistress's name?"

"She has been my mistress a long time, sir," answered Peggotty. "I ought to know."

"That's true," he answered. "But I thought I heard you, as I came up-stairs, address her by a name that is not hers. She has taken mine, you know. Will you remember that?"

Peggotty, with some uneasy glances at me, curtseyed herself out of the room without replying; seeing, I suppose, that she was expected to go, and had no excuse for remaining. When we two were left alone, he shut the door, and sitting on a chair, and holding me standing before him, looked steadily into my eyes.

"David," he said, making his lips thin, by pressing them together, "if I have an obstinate

horse or dog to deal with, what do you think I do?"

"I don't know."

"I beat him."

I had answered in a kind of breathless whisper, but I felt, in my silence, that my breath was shorter now.

"I make him wince, and smart. I say to myself, 'I'll conquer that fellow'; and if it were to cost him all the blood he had, I should do it. What is that upon your face?"

"Dirt," I said.

He knew it was the mark of tears as well as I. But if he had asked the question twenty times, each time with twenty blows, I believe my baby heart would have burst before I would have told him so.

"You have a good deal of intelligence for a little fellow," he said. "Wash that face, sir, and come down with me."

He pointed to the washing-stand, and motioned me with his head to obey him directly.

"Clara, my dear," he said, when I had done his bidding, and he walked me into the parlour, with his hand still on my arm; "you will not be made uncomfortable any more, I hope. We shall soon improve our youthful humours."

(We dined alone, we three together.) I gathered from what he said, that an elder sister of his

was coming to stay with us, and that she was expected that evening. I am not certain whether I found out then or afterwards, that, without being actively concerned in any business, he had some share in, or some annual charge upon the profits of, a wine-merchant's house in London, with which his family had been connected from his great-grandfather's time, and in which his sister had a similar interest.

CHAPTER IV

After dinner, when we were sitting by the fire, and I was meditating an escape to Peggotty without having the hardihood to slip away, lest it should offend the master of the house, a coach drove up to the garden-gate, and Mr. Murdstone went out to receive the visitor. My mother followed him. I was timidly following her, when she turned round at the parlour-door, in the dusk, and taking me in her embrace as she had been used to do, whispered me to love my new father and be obedient to him.

It was Miss Murdstone who was arrived, and a gloomy-looking lady she was; dark, like her brother, whom she greatly resembled in face and voice. I had never, at that time, seen such a metallic lady altogether as Miss Murdstone was.

She was brought into the parlour with many tokens of welcome, and there she formally recognized my mother as a new and near relation. Then she looked at me, and said :

“ Is that your boy, sister-in-law ? ”

My mother acknowledged me.

“ Generally speaking,” said Miss Murdstone, “ I don’t like boys. How d’ye do, boy ? ”

(Under these encouraging circumstances, I replied that I was very well, and that I hoped she was the same; with such an indifferent grace, that Miss Murdstone disposed of me in two words :

“ Wants manners ! ”)

As well as I could make out, she had come for good, and had no intention of ever going again. She began to “ help ” my mother next morning, and was in and out of the store-closet all day, putting things to rights, and making havoc in the old arrangements.

She was up before anybody in the house was stirring.

On the very first morning after her arrival, when my mother came down to breakfast and was going to make the tea, Miss Murdstone gave her a kind of peck on the cheek, which was her nearest approach to a kiss, and said :

“ Now, Clara, my dear, I am come here, you know, to relieve you of all the trouble I can. If

you'll be so good as to give me your keys, my dear, I'll attend to all this sort of thing in future."

From that time, Miss Murdstone kept the keys in her own little bag all day, and under her pillow all night, and my mother had no more to do with them than I had.

(My mother did not suffer her authority to pass from her without a shadow of protest.) One night when Miss Murdstone had been developing certain household plans to her brother, of which he signified his approbation, my mother suddenly began to cry, and said she thought she might have been consulted.

"Clara!" said Mr. Murdstone sternly.

"Clara! I wonder at you."

"Oh, it's very well to say you wonder, Edward!" cried my mother, "and it's very well for you to talk about firmness, but you wouldn't like it yourself. It's very hard that in my own house——"

"My own house?" repeated Mr. Murdstone.

"Clara!"

"Our own house, I mean," faltered my mother, evidently frightened—"I hope you must know what I mean, Edward—it's very hard that in *your* own house I may not have a word to say about domestic matters."

“Edward,” said Miss Murdstone, “let there be an end of this. I go to-morrow.”

“I am sure,” my poor mother went on at a grievous disadvantage, and with many tears, “I don’t want anybody to go. I should be very miserable and unhappy if anybody was to go. I don’t ask much. I am not unreasonable. I only want to be consulted sometimes. I am very much obliged to anybody who assists me, and I only want to be consulted as a mere form, sometimes. I thought you were pleased, once, with my being a little inexperienced and girlish, Edward—I am sure you said so—but you seem to hate me for it now, you are so severe.”

“Edward,” said Miss Murdstone, again, “let there be an end of this. I go to-morrow.”

“Jane Murdstone,” thundered Mr. Murdstone. “Will you be silent? How dare you?”

(Miss Murdstone made a jail-delivery of her pocket-handkerchief, and held it before her eyes.)

Going down next morning rather earlier than usual, I paused outside the parlour-door, on hearing my mother’s voice. She was very earnestly and humbly entreating Miss Murdstone’s pardon, which that lady granted, and a perfect reconciliation took place. I never knew my mother afterwards to give an opinion on any matter, without first appealing to Miss Murdstone, or without having first ascer-

tained, by some sure means, what Miss Murdstone's opinion was.

(The gloomy taint that was in the Murdstone blood, darkened the Murdstone religion, which was austere and wrathful.) I well remember the tremendous visages with which we used to go to church, and the changed air of the place. If I move a finger or relax a muscle of my face, Miss Murdstone pokes me with her prayer-book, and makes my side ache.

There had been some talk on occasion of my going to boarding-school. Mr. and Miss Murdstone had originated it, and my mother had of course agreed with them. Nothing, however, was concluded on the subject yet. In the meantime I learnt lessons at home.

Shall I ever forget those lessons! I had been apt enough to learn, and willing enough, when my mother and I had lived alone together. I can faintly remember learning the alphabet at her knee. To this day, when I look upon the fat black letters in the primer, their novel and puzzling shapes seem to present themselves again before me as they used to do. But they recall no feeling of disgust or reluctance. (On the contrary, I seem to have walked along a path of flowers as far as the crocodile-book, and to have been cheered by the gentleness of my mother's voice and manner all the way.

But these solemn lessons which succeeded those, I remember as the death-blow at my peace, and a grievous daily drudgery and misery.

Let me remember how it used to be, and bring one morning back again.

I come into the second best parlour after breakfast, with my books, an exercise-book and a slate. My mother is ready for me at her writing-desk, but not half so ready as Mr. Murdstone in his easy-chair by the window (though he pretends to be reading a book), or as Miss Murdstone, sitting near my mother. The very sight of these two has such an influence over me, that I begin to feel the words I have been at infinite pains to get into my head, all sliding away, and going I don't know where. I wonder where they *do* go, by-the-by.

I hand the first book to my mother. Perhaps it is a grammar, perhaps a history or geography. I take a last drowning look at the page as I give it into her hand, and start off aloud at a racing pace while I have got it fresh. I trip over a word. Mr. Murdstone looks up. I trip over another word. Miss Murdstone looks up. I redden, tumble over half-a-dozen words, and stop. I think my mother would show me the book if she dared, but she does not dare. She glances submissively at them, shuts the book, and lays it by as an arrear to be worked out when my other tasks are done.

There is a pile of these arrears very soon, and it swells like a rolling snowball. The bigger it gets, the more stupid *I* get. (The case is so hopeless, and I feel that I am wallowing in such a bog of nonsense, that I give up all idea of getting out, and abandon myself to my fate.) The despairing way in which my mother and I look at each other, as I blunder on, is truly melancholy.

One morning, when I went into the parlour with my books, I found my mother looking anxious, Miss Murdstone looking firm, and Mr. Murdstone binding something round the bottom of a cane—a lithe and limber cane, which he left off binding when I came in, and poised and switched in the air.

“ I tell you, Clara,” said Mr. Murdstone, “ I have been often flogged myself.”

“ To be sure; of course,” said Miss Murdstone.

“ Certainly, my dear Jane,” faltered my mother, meekly. “ But—but do you think it did Edward good?”

“ Do you think it did Edward harm, Clara?” asked Mr. Murdstone, gravely.

“ That’s the point,” said his sister.

To this my mother returned, “ Certainly, my dear Jane.” and said no more.

I felt apprehensive that I was personally

interested in this dialogue, and sought Mr. Murdstone's eye as it lighted on mine.

"Now, David," he said, "you must be far more careful to-day than usual." He gave the cane another poise, and another switch; and having finished his preparation of it, laid it down beside him, with an impressive look, and took up his book.

(This was a good freshener to my presence of mind, as a beginning. I felt the words of my lessons slipping off, not one by one, or line by line, but by the entire page.)

We began badly, and went on worse. I had come in with an idea of distinguishing myself rather, conceiving that I was very well prepared; but it turned out to be quite a mistake. Book after book was added to the heap of failures, Miss Murdstone being firmly watchful of us all the time. At last my mother burst out crying. ✓

"Clara!" said Miss Murdstone, in her warning voice.

"I am not quite well, my dear Jane, I think," said my mother.

I saw him wink, solemnly, at his sister, as he rose and said, taking up the cane :

"Why, Jane, we can hardly expect Clara to bear, with perfect firmness, the worry and torment that David has occasioned her to-day. That would

be stoical. Clara is greatly strengthened and improved, but we can hardly expect so much from her. David, you and I will go up-stairs, boy."

As he took me out at the door, my mother ran towards us. Miss Murdstone said, "Clara! are you a perfect fool?" and interfered. I saw my mother stop her ears then, and I heard her crying.

He walked me up to my room slowly and gravely and, when we got there, suddenly twisted my head under his arm.

"Mr. Murdstone! Sir!" I cried to him. "Don't! Pray don't beat me! I have tried to learn, sir, but I can't learn while you and Miss Murdstone are by. I can't indeed!"

"Can't you, indeed, David?" he said. "We'll try that."

He had my head as in a vice, but I twined round him somehow, and stopped him for a moment, entreating him not to beat me. It was only for a moment that I stopped him, for he cut me heavily an instant afterwards, and in the same instant I caught the hand with which he held me in my mouth, between my teeth, and bit it through. It sets my teeth on edge to think of it.

He beat me then as if he would have beaten me to death. Above all the noise we made, I heard them running up the stairs, and crying out—I heard my mother crying out—and Peggotty. Then he

was gone; and the door was locked outside; and (I was lying, fevered and hot, and torn, and sore, and raging in my puny way, upon the floor.)

How well I recollect, when I became quiet, what an unnatural stillness seemed to reign through the whole house! I crawled up from the floor, and saw my face in the glass, so swollen, red, and ugly that it almost frightened me. My stripes were sore and stiff, and made me cry afresh, when I moved; but they were nothing to the guilt I felt.

It had begun to grow dark, and I had shut the window (I had been lying, for the most part, with my head upon the sill, by turns crying, dozing, and looking listlessly out), when the key was turned, and Miss Murdstone came in with some bread and meat, and milk. These she put down upon the table without a word, glaring at me the while with exemplary firmness, and then retired, locking the door after her.

I never shall forget the waking next morning; I was cheerful and fresh for the first moment, but very soon felt weighed down by the stale and dismal oppression of remembrance.) Miss Murdstone re-appeared before I was out of bed; told me, in so many words, that I was free to walk in the garden for half an hour and no longer; and retired, leaving the door open.

I did so, and did so every morning of my imprisonment, which lasted five days. If I could have seen my mother alone, I should have gone down on my knees to her and besought her forgiveness; but I saw no one, Miss Murdstone excepted, during the whole time—except at evening prayers in the parlour; to which I was escorted by Miss Murdstone after everybody else was placed. (Here I was stationed, a young outlaw, all alone by myself near the door, and from this place I was conducted by my jailer, before any one arose from the devotional posture.) I only observed that my mother was as far off from me as she could be, and kept her face another way, so that I never saw it; and that Mr. Murdstone's hand was bound up in a large linen wrapper.

(The length of those five days I can convey no idea of to any one. They occupy the place of years in my remembrance.)

CHAPTER V

On the last night of my restraint, I was awakened by hearing my own name spoken in a whisper. I started up in bed, and putting out my arms in the dark, said :

“ Is that you, Peggotty ? ”

There was no immediate answer, but presently I heard my name again, in a tone so very mysterious and awful, that I think I should have gone into a fit, if it had not occurred to me that it must have come through the keyhole.

I groped my way to the door, and putting my own lips to the keyhole, whispered :

“ Is that you, Peggotty dear?”

“ Yes, my own precious Davy,” she replied.

“ How’s mama, dear Peggotty? Is she very angry with me?”

“ No. Not very.”

“ What is going to be done with me, Peggotty dear? Do you know?”

“ School. Near London,” was Peggotty’s answer.

“ When, Peggotty?”

“ To-morrow.”

“ Shan’t I see mama?”

“ Yes,” said Peggotty. “ Morning.”

Then Peggotty fitted her mouth close to the keyhole, and delivered these words :

“ Davy, dear! what I want to say is that you must never forget me. For I’ll never forget you. And I’ll take as much care of your mama, Davy, as ever I took of you. And I won’t leave her.”

“ Thank you, dear Peggotty!” said I. “ Oh, thank you! Thank you! Will you promise me one thing, Peggotty? Will you write and tell Mr. Peggotty and little Em’ly, and Mrs. Gummidge and Ham, that I am not so bad as they might suppose, and that I sent ’em all my love—especially to little Em’ly? Will you, if you please, Peggotty?”

The kind soul promised, and we both of us kissed the key-hole with the greatest affection. From that night there grew up in my breast a feeling for Peggotty which I cannot very well define.

In the morning Miss Murdstone appeared as usual, and told me I was going to school; which was not altogether such news to me as she supposed. She also informed me that when I was dressed, I was to come down-stairs into the parlour, and have my breakfast. There I found my mother, very pale and with red eyes: into whose arms I ran, and begged her pardon from my suffering soul.

“ Oh, Davy!” she said. “ That you could hurt any one I love! Try to be better, pray to be better! I forgive you; but I am so grieved, Davy, that you should have such bad passions in your heart.”

“ Master Copperfield’s box there!” said Miss Murdstone, when wheels were heard at the gate.

I looked for Peggotty, but it was not she; neither she nor Mr. Murdstone. appeared. My former acquaintance, the carrier, was at the door; the box was taken out to his cart, and lifted in.

“Clara!” said Miss Murdstone, in her warning note.

“Ready, my dear Jane,” returned my mother. “Good-bye, Davy. You are going for your own good. Good-bye, my child. You will come home in the holidays, and be a better boy.”

“Clara!” Miss Murdstone repeated.

“Certainly, my dear Jane,” replied my mother, who was holding me. “I forgive you, my dear boy. God bless you!”

“Clara!” Miss Murdstone repeated.

Miss Murdstone was good enough to take me out to the cart, and to say on the way that she hoped I would repent, before I came to a bad end; and then I got into the cart, and the lazy horse walked off with it.

We might have gone about half a mile, and my pocket-handkerchief was quite wet through.

Having by this time cried as much as I possibly could, I began to think it was of no use crying any more.

CHAPTER VI

What an amazing place London was to me when I saw it in the distance! I reached it by stage-coach from Yarmouth, where the carrier's cart had taken me from Blunderstone.

The guard's eye lighted on me as he was getting down, and he said at the booking-office door :

"Is there anybody here for a yoongster booked in the name of Murdstone, from Bloonderstone, Sooffolk, to be left till called for?"

Nobody answered.

"Try Copperfield, if you please, sir," said I, looking helplessly down.

"Is there anybody here for a yoongster, booked in the name of Murdstone, from Bloonderstone, Sooffolk, but owing to the name of Copperfield, to be left till called for?" said the guard.

"Come! *Is* there anybody?"

No. There was nobody.

I went into the booking-office, and, by invitation of the clerk on duty, passed behind the counter, and sat down on the scale at which they weighed the luggage. Here, as I sat looking at the parcels, packages, and books, a man entered and whispered to the clerk, who presently slanted me off the scale, and pushed me over to him.

As I went out of the office, hand in hand with this new acquaintance, I stole a look at him. He was a gaunt, sallow young man, with hollow cheeks, and a chin almost as black as Mr. Murdstone's.

"You're the new boy?" he said.

"Yes, sir," I said.

I supposed I was. I didn't know.

"I'm one of the masters at Salem House," he said.

I made him a bow and felt very much overawed.

We found the coach very near at hand, and got upon the roof; but I was so dead sleepy, that when we stopped on the road to take up somebody else, they put me inside where there were no passengers, and where I slept profoundly, until I found the coach going at a footpace up a steep hill among green leaves. Presently, it stopped, and had come to its destination.

A short walk brought us—I mean the Master and me—to Salem House, which was enclosed with a high brick wall, and looked very dull. Over a door in this wall was a board with SALEM HOUSE upon it; and through a grating in this door we were surveyed, when we rang the bell, by a surly face, which, I found, on the door being opened, belonged to a stout man with a bull-neck, a wooden

leg, overhanging temples, and his hair cut close all round his head.

“The new boy,” said the Master.

Salem House was a square brick building with wings, of a bare and unfurnished appearance. It was holiday-time, and all the boys were at their several homes. Mr. Creakle, the proprietor, was down by the sea-side with Mrs. and Miss Creakle. And I was sent in holiday-time as a punishment for my misdoing. All of which Mr. Mell, the Master, explained to me as we went along.

I gazed upon the school-room into which he took me, as the most forlorn and desolate place I had ever seen. I see it now. A long room, with three long rows of desks, and six of forms, and bristling all round with pegs for hats and slates. Scraps of old copy-books and exercises litter the dirty floor. Some silk-worms’ houses, made of the same materials, are scattered over the desks. There is a strange unwholesome smell upon the room, like mildewed corduroys, sweet apples wanting air, and rotten books. There could not well be more ink splashed about it, if it had been roofless from its first construction, and the skies had rained, snowed, hailed, and blown ink through the varying seasons of the year.

Suddenly I came upon a pasteboard placard, beautifully written, which was lying on a desk,

and bore these words: "*Take care of him. He bites.*"

I got upon the desk immediately, apprehensive of at least a great dog underneath. But, though I looked all round with anxious eyes, I could see nothing of him. I was still engaged in peering about, when Mr. Mell asked me what I did up there.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said I, "if you please, I'm looking for the dog."

"Dog?" said he. "What dog?"

"Isn't it a dog, sir?"

"Isn't what a dog, sir?"

"That's to be taken care of, sir; that bites?"

"No, Copperfield," said he, gravely, "that's not a dog. That's a boy. My instructions are, Copperfield, to put this placard on your back. I am sorry to make such a beginning with you, but I must do it."

With that he took me down, and tied the placard, which was neatly constructed for the purpose, on my shoulders like a knapsack; and wherever I went, afterwards, I had the consolation of carrying it.

What I suffered from that placard nobody can imagine. Whether it was possible for people to see me or not, I always fancied that somebody was reading it. That cruel man with the wooden leg

aggravated my sufferings. He was in authority, and if he ever saw me leaning against a tree, or a wall, or the house, he roared out from his lodge-door in a stupendous voice, "Hallo, you sir! You Copperfield! Show that badge conspicuous, or I'll report you!" The playground was a bare gravelled yard, open to all the back of the house and the offices; and I knew that the servants read it, and the butcher read it, and the baker read it; that everybody, in a word, who came backwards and forwards to the house, of a morning when I was ordered to walk there, read that I was to be taken care of, for I bit. (I recollect that I positively began to have a dread of myself, as a kind of wild boy who did bite.)

One day I was informed by Mr. Mell that Mr. Creakle would be home that evening. In the evening, after tea, I heard that he was come. Before bed-time, I was fetched by the man with the wooden leg to appear before him.

Mr. Creakle's part of the house was a good deal more comfortable than ours, and he had a snug bit of garden that looked pleasant after the dusty playground. It seemed to me a bold thing even to take notice that the passage looked comfortable, as I went on my way, trembling, to Mr. Creakle's presence: which so abashed me, when I was ushered into it, that I hardly saw Mrs. Creakle

or Miss Creakle (who were both there, in the parlour), or anything but Mr. Creakle, a stout gentleman with a bunch of watch-chain and seals, in an arm-chair, with a tumbler and bottle beside him.

"So!" said Mr. Creakle. "This is the young gentleman whose teeth are to be filed! Turn him round."

The wooden-legged man turned me about so as to exhibit the placard; and having afforded time for a full survey of it, turned me about again, with my face to Mr. Creakle, and posted himself at Mr. Creakle's side. [Mr. Creakle's face was fiery, and his eyes were small, and deep in his head; he had thick veins in his forehead, a little nose, and a large chin. He was bald on the top of his head; and had some thin wet-looking hair that was just turning grey, brushed across each temple, so that the two sides interlaced on his forehead. But the circumstance about him which impressed me most, was, that he had no voice, but spoke in a whisper. The exertion this cost him, or the consciousness of talking in that feeble way, made his angry face much more angry.

"Now," said Mr. Creakle. "What's the report of this boy?"

"There's nothing against him yet," returned the man with the wooden leg. "There has been no opportunity."

I thought Mr. Creakle was disappointed.

"Come here; sir!" said Mr. Creakle, beckoning to me.

"I have the happiness of knowing your father-in-law," whispered Mr. Creakle, taking me by the ear; "and a worthy man he is, and a man of strong character. He knows me, and I know him. Do you know me? Hey?" said Mr. Creakle, pinching my ear with ferocious playfulness.

"Not yet, sir," I said, flinching with the pain.

"Not yet? Hey?" repeated Mr. Creakle.
"But you will soon. Hey?"

"You will soon. Hey?" repeated the man with the wooden leg. I afterwards found that he generally acted, with his strong voice, as Mr. Creakle's interpreter to the boys.

I was very much frightened, and said I hoped so, if he pleased. I felt, all this while, as if my ear were blazing; he pinched it so hard.

"I'll tell you what I am," whispered Mr. Creakle, letting it go at last, with a screw at parting that brought the water into my eyes. "I'm a Tartar."

"A Tartar," said the man with the wooden leg.

"When I say I'll do a thing, I do it," said

Mr. Creakle; "and when I say I will have a thing done, I will have it done."

"—Will have a thing done, I will have it done," repeated the man with the wooden leg.

"Now you have begun to know me, my young friend, and you may go. Take him away," said Mr. Creakle.

I was very glad to be ordered away. But I had a petition on my mind which concerned me so nearly, that I couldn't help saying, though I wondered at my own courage :

"If you please, sir——"

Mr. Creakle whispered, "Hah! What's this?" and bent his eyes upon me, as if he would have burnt me up with them.

"If you please, sir," I faltered, "if I might be allowed (I am very sorry indeed, sir, for what I did) to take this writing off, before the boys come back——"

Whether Mr. Creakle was in earnest, or whether he only did it to frighten me, I don't know, but he made a burst out of his chair, before which I precipitately retreated.

CHAPTER VII

Next morning Mr. Sharp came back. Mr. Sharp was the first master, and superior to Mr.

Mell. Mr. Mell took his meals with the boys, but Mr. Sharp dined and supped at Mr. Creakle's table.

Tommy Traddles was the first boy who returned. He introduced himself by informing me that I should find his name on the right-hand corner of the gate, over the top-bolt.

It was a happy circumstance for me that Traddles came back first. (He enjoyed my placard so much, that he saved me from the embarrassment of either disclosure or concealment, by presenting me to every other boy who came back, great or small, immediately on his arrival, in this form of introduction, "Look here! Here's a game!") Happily, too, the greater part of the boys came back low-spirited, and were not so boisterous at my expense as I had expected. Some of them certainly did dance about me like wild Indians, and the greater part could not resist the temptation of pretending that I was a dog, and patting and smoothing me, lest I should bite, and saying, "Lie down, sir!" This was naturally confusing, among so many strangers, and cost me some tears, but on the whole it was much better than I had anticipated.

I was not considered as being formally received into the school, however, until J. Steerforth arrived. Before this boy, who was reputed to be

a great scholar, and was very good-looking, and at least half-a-dozen years my senior, I was carried as before a magistrate. He inquired, under a shed in the play-ground, into the particulars of my punishment, and was pleased to express his opinion that it was "a jolly shame"; for which I became bound to him ever afterwards.

"Copperfield," said Steerforth. "I'll take care of you."

"You're very kind," I gratefully returned. "I am very much obliged to you."

I heard all kinds of things about the school and all belonging to it. {I heard that Mr. Creakle had not preferred his claim to being a Tartar without reason; that he was the sternest and most severe of masters; that he laid about him, right and left, every day of his life, charging in among the boys like a trooper, and slashing away, unmercifully;) that he knew nothing himself, but the art of slashing; that he had been, a good many years ago, a small hop-dealer in the Borough, and had taken to the schooling business after being bankrupt in hops, and making away with Mrs. Creakle's money.

I heard that the man with the wooden leg, whose name was Tungay, was an obstinate barbarian who had formerly assisted in the hop business, but had come into the scholastic line with

Mr. Creakle, in consequence, as was supposed among the boys, of his having broken his leg in Mr. Creakle's service, and having done a deal of dishonest work for him, and knowing his secrets.

But the greatest wonder that I heard of Mr. Creakle was this: there was one boy in the school on whom he never ventured to lay a hand, and that boy was J. Steerforth. Steerforth himself confirmed this.

School began in earnest next day. A profound impression was made upon me, I remember, by the roar of voices in the schoolroom suddenly becoming hushed as death when Mr. Creakle entered after breakfast, and stood in the doorway looking round upon us like a giant in a story-book surveying his captives.

Tungay stood at Mr. Creakle's elbow. He had no occasion, I thought, to cry out "Silence!" so ferociously, for the boys were all struck speechless and motionless.

Mr. Creakle spoke to this effect:

"Now, boys, this is a new half. Take care what you're about, in this new half. (Come fresh up to the lessons, I advise you, for I come fresh up to the punishment.) I won't flinch. It will be of no use your rubbing yourselves; you won't rub the marks out that I shall give you. Now get to work, every boy!"

When this dreadful exordium was over, and Tungay had stumped out again, Mr. Creakle came to where I sat, and told me that if I was famous for biting, he was famous for biting, too. He then showed me the cane, and asked me what I thought of *that*, for a tooth? Was it a sharp tooth, hey? Was it a double tooth, hey? Had it a deep prong, hey? Did it bite, hey? Did it bite? At every question he gave me a fleshy cut with it that made me writhe; and I was very soon in tears.

Not that I mean to say these were special marks of distinction, which only I received. On the contrary, a large majority of the boys (especially the smaller ones) were visited with similar instances of notice, as Mr. Creakle made the round of the schoolroom. Half the establishment was writhing and crying, before the day's work began; and how much of it had writhed and cried before the day's work was over, I am really afraid to recollect, lest I should seem to exaggerate.

(In a tight sky-blue suit poor Traddles was the merriest and most miserable of all the boys.) He was always being caned—I think he was caned every day that half-year, except one holiday Monday when he was only ruler'd on both hands—and was always going to write to his uncle about it, and never did. After laying his head on the desk

for a little while, he would cheer up somehow, begin to laugh again, and draw skeletons all over his slate, before his eyes were dry. I used at first to wonder what comfort Traddles found in drawing skeletons.

He was very honourable; Traddles was, and held it as a solemn duty in the boys to stand by one another. He suffered for this on several occasions; and particularly once, when Steerforth laughed in church, and the Beadle thought it was Traddles, and took him out. (I see him now, going away in custody, despised by the congregation.) He never said who was the real offender, though he smarted for it next day, and was imprisoned so many hours that he came forth with a whole churchyardful of skeletons swarming all over his Latin Dictionary. But he had his reward. Steerforth said there was nothing of the sneak in Traddles, and we all felt that to be the highest praise. For my part, I could have gone through a good deal (though I was much less brave than Traddles, and nothing like so old) to have won such a recompense.

Steerforth continued his protection of me, and proved a very useful friend, since nobody dared to annoy one whom he honoured with his countenance. He couldn't—or at all events he didn't—defend me from Mr. Creakle, who was very severe

with me; (but whenever I had been treated worse than usual, he always told me that I wanted a little of his pluck, and that he wouldn't have stood it himself.)

CHAPTER VIII

Term at last came to an end, and to my surprise and delight, I found myself inside the mail, and going home. Soon I was at our house, and when I set foot in the hall, many memories were awakened within by the sound of my mother's voice in the old parlour. She was singing in a low tone.

I believed, from the solitary and thoughtful way in which my mother murmured her song, that she was alone. And I went softly into the room. She was sitting by the fire, suckling an infant, whose tiny hand she held against her neck. Her eyes were looking down upon its face, and she sat singing to it. I was so far right, that she had no other companion.

I spoke to her, and she started, and cried out. But seeing me, she called me her dear Davy, her own boy! and coming half across the room to meet me, kneeled down upon the ground and kissed me, and laid my head down on the bosom near the little creature that was nestling there, and put its hand up to my lips.

"He is your brother," said my mother, fondling me. "Davy, my pretty boy! My poor child!" This she was doing when Peggotty came running in, and bounced down on the ground beside us, and went mad about us both for a quarter of an hour.

It seemed that Mr. and Miss Murdstone had gone out upon a visit in the neighbourhood, and would not return before night. I had never hoped for this. I had never thought it possible that we three could be together undisturbed, once more; and I felt, for the time, as if the old days were come back.

We dined together by the fireside. Peggotty was in attendance to wait upon us, but my mother wouldn't let her do it, and made her dine with us.

• Then we sat round the fire, and talked delightfully. I told them what a hard master Mr. Creakle was, and they pitied me very much. I told them what a fine fellow Traddles was, and what a patron of mine Steerforth was, and Peggotty said she would walk a score of miles to see them. I took the little baby in my arms when it was awake, and nursed it lovingly.

It was almost ten o'clock, and I kissed my mother, and went up-stairs, with my candle, before Mr. and Miss Murdstone came in.

I felt uncomfortable about going down to

breakfast in the morning, as I had never set eyes on Mr. Murdstone since the day when I committed my memorable offence. However, as it must be done, I went down, and presented myself in the parlour.

He was standing before the fire with his back to it, while Miss Murdstone made the tea. He looked at me steadily as I entered, but made no sign of recognition whatever.

I went up to him, after a moment of confusion, and said: "I beg your pardon, sir. I am very sorry for what I did, and I hope you will forgive me."

"I am glad to hear you are sorry, David," he replied.

The hand he gave me was the hand I had bitten. I could not restrain my eye from resting for an instant on a red spot upon it.

"How do you do, ma'am?" I said to Miss Murdstone.

"Ah, dear me!" sighed Miss Murdstone, giving me the tea-caddy scoop instead of her fingers.

"How long are the holidays?"

"A month, ma'am."

"Counting from when?"

"From to-day, ma'am."

"Oh!" said Miss Murdstone. "Then here's one day off."

I was not a favourite there with anybody. I felt that I made them as uncomfortable as they made me. (If I came into the room where they were, and they were talking together and my mother seemed cheerful, an anxious cloud would steal over her face from the moment of my entrance.) If Mr. Murdstone were in his best humour, I checked him. If Miss Murdstone were in her worst, I intensified it. I had perception enough to know that my mother was the victim always; that she was afraid to speak to me, or be kind to me, lest she should give them some offence by her manner of doing so, and receive a lecture afterwards.

In the evening, sometimes, I went and sat with Peggotty in the kitchen. There I was comfortable, and not afraid of being myself. But this resource was not approved of in the parlour.

Thus the holidays lagged away, until the morning came when Miss Murdstone said, "Here's the last day off!" and gave me the closing cup of tea of the vacation.

I was not sorry to go. I had lapsed into a stupid state; but I was recovering a little and looking forward to Steerforth, albeit Mr. Creakle loomed behind him.

How well I recollect the anniversary of my birth in March next! I smell the fog that hung

about the place; I see the hoar frost, ghostly, through it; I feel my rimy hair fall clammy on my cheek; I look along the dim perspective of the school-room, with a sputtering candle here and there to light up the foggy morning.

It was after breakfast, and we had been summoned in from the playground, when Mr. Sharp entered and said :

“ David Copperfield is to go into the parlour.”

I hurried away to the parlour; and there I found Mr. Creakle, sitting at his breakfast with the cane and a newspaper before him, and Mrs. Creakle with an opened letter in her hand.

“ David Copperfield,” said Mrs. Creakle, leading me to a sofa, and sitting down beside me. “ I want to speak to you very particularly. I have something to tell you, my child.”

Mr. Creakle, at whom of course I looked, shook his head without looking at me.

I looked at her earnestly.

“ When you came away from home at the end of the vacation,” said Mrs. Creakle, after a pause, “ were they all well? ” After another pause, “ Was your mama well? ”

I trembled without distinctly knowing why, and still looked at her earnestly, making no attempt to answer.

"Because," said she, "I grieve to tell you that I hear this morning your mama is very ill."

(A mist rose between Mrs. Creakle and me, and her figure seemed to move in it for an instant. Then I felt the burning tears run down my face, and it was steady again.)

"She is very dangerously ill," she added.

I knew all now.

"She is dead."

(There was no need to tell me so. I had already broken out into a desolate cry, and felt an orphan in the wide world.)

She was very kind to me. She kept me there all day, and left me alone sometimes; and I cried, and wore myself to sleep, and awoke and cried again. When I could cry no more, I began to think.

I thought of our house shut up and hushed. I thought of the little baby, who, Mrs. Creakle said, had been pining away for some time, and who, they believed, would die too. I thought of my father's grave in the churchyard by our house, and of my mother lying there beneath the tree I knew so well.

I left Salem House upon the morrow afternoon. I little thought then that I left it, never to return.

When I reached home, I dropped out of the chaise behind, as quickly as possible.

I was in Peggotty's arms before I got to the door, and she took me into the house. Her grief burst out when she first saw me; but she controlled it soon, and spoke in whispers, and walked softly, as if the dead could be disturbed. She had not been in bed, I found, for a long time. She sat up at night still, and watched. As long as her poor dear pretty was above the ground, she said, she would never desert her.

If the funeral had been yesterday, I could not recollect it better.

When we go out to the door, the Bearers and their load are in the garden; and they move before us down the path, and past the elms, and through the gate, and into the churchyard, where I have so often heard the birds sing on a summer morning.

We stand around the grave. The day seems different to me from every other day, and the light not of the same colour—of a sadder colour. Now there is a solemn hush, which we have brought from home with what is resting in the mould; and while we stand bare-headed, I hear the voice of the clergyman, sounding remote in the open air, and yet distinct and plain, saying, "I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord!" Then I hear sobs; and, standing apart among the lookers-on, I see that good and faithful servant, whom of all the people upon earth I love the best, and unto

whom my childish heart is certain that the Lord will one day say, "Well done!"

It is over, and the earth is filled in, and we turn to come away.

Immediately after the funeral Miss Murdstone discharged Peggotty. When she left for Yarmouth, I was permitted by Mr. Murdstone to accompany her. I was glad to meet my humble friends again after my bereavement. Peggotty soon married and I returned to Blunderstone after a short while. I fell at once into a solitary condition. Mr. Murdstone and his sister now avoided me. Even the baby had died. (I was not ill-used, beaten or starved as before, but day after day, month after month, I was coldly neglected.) (What would I have given to be sent to the hardest school—to have been taught something, anyhow, anywhere!)

One evening Mr. Quinion, a friend of Mr. Murdstone, came to see him. He lay at our house that night. After breakfast, the next morning, I had put my chair away, and was going out of the room, when Mr. Murdstone called me back. He then gravely repaired to another table, while his sister sat herself at her desk. Mr. Quinion, with his hands in his pockets, stood looking out of the window; and I stood looking at them all.

"David," said Mr. Murdstone, "to the young

this is a world for action; not for moping and droning in."

—"As you do," added his sister.

He gave her a look, half in remonstrance, half in approval, and went on:

"I suppose you know, David, that I am not rich. At any rate, you know it now. You have received some considerable education already. Education is costly; and even if it were not, and I could afford it, I am of opinion that it would not be at all advantageous to you to be kept at a school. What is before you, is a fight with the world; and the sooner you begin it, the better."

I think it occurred to me that I had already begun it, in my poor way.

"You have heard the 'counting-house' mentioned sometimes," continued Mr. Murdstone.

"The counting-house, sir?" I repeated.

"Of Murdstone and Grinby, in the wine trade," he replied.

"I think I have heard the business mentioned, sir," I said.

"Mr. Quinion manages that business," he returned.

I glanced at the latter deferentially as he stood looking out of the window.

"Mr. Quinion suggests that it gives employment to some other boys, and that he sees no reason

why it shouldn't, on the same terms, give employment to you," Mr. Murdstone resumed. "Those terms are, that you earn enough for yourself to provide for your eating and drinking, and pocket-money. Your lodging (which I have arranged for) will be paid by me. So will your washing."

"Which will be kept down to my estimate," said his sister.

"Your clothes will be looked after for you, too," said Mr. Murdstone; "as you will not be able, yet awhile, to get them for yourself. So you are now going to London, David, with Mr. Quinion, to begin the world on your own account."

CHAPTER IX

I thus became, at ten years old, a little labouring hind in the service of Murdstone and Grinby. Their warehouse was at the water side. It was down in Blackfriars, and was a crazy old house with a wharf of its own, abutting on the water when the tide was in, and on the mud when the tide was out, and literally overrun with rats.

An important branch of Murdstone and Grinby's trade was the supply of wines and spirits to certain packet ships. I forget now where they chiefly went. I know that a great many empty bottles were one of the consequences

of this traffic, and that certain men and boys were employed to examine them against the light, and to rinse and wash them. When the empty bottles ran short, there were labels to be pasted on full ones, or corks to be fitted to them, or seals to be put upon the corks, or finished bottles to be packed in casks. All this work was my work, and of the boys employed upon it I was one. My pay was six shillings a week.

(On the first morning of my so auspiciously beginning life on my own account, the oldest of the regular boys was summoned to show me my business.) He informed me that his father was a barge-man. He also informed me that our principal associate would be another boy, whose father was a waterman, who had the additional distinction of being a fireman.

(No words can express the secret agony of my soul as I sunk into this companionship and felt my hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man crushed in my bosom.)

The counting-house clock was at half-past twelve, and there was general preparation for going to dinner, when Mr. Quinion tapped at the counting-house window, and beckoned to me to go in. I went in, and was introduced by him to (a bald-headed, stoutish, middle-aged gentleman in a brown surtout and black tights and shoes.)

“ This is Mr. Micawber,” said Mr. Quinion to me.

“ Ahem ! ” said the stranger, “ that is my name.”

“ Mr. Micawber,” said Mr. Quinion, “ is known to Mr. Murdstone. He takes orders for us on commission, when he can get any. He has been written to by Mr. Murdstone, on the subject of your lodgings, and he will receive you as a lodger.”

“ My address,” said Mr. Micawber, “ is Windsor Terrace, City Road. I shall be happy to call this evening, and instal you in the knowledge of the nearest way.”

I thanked him with all my heart, for it was friendly in him to offer to take that trouble.

Arrived at his house in Windsor Terrace, he presented me to Mrs. Micawber, a thin and faded lady, not at all young, who was sitting in the parlour with a baby at her breast. This baby was one of twins.

There were two other children: Master Micawber, aged about four, and Miss Micawber, aged about three. These, and a dark-complexioned young woman, with a habit of snorting, who was servant to the family, completed the establishment.

“ I never thought,” said Mrs. Micawber, when she came up, twin and all, to show me the apartment, and sat down to take breath, “ before I was

married, when I lived with papa and mama, that I should ever find it necessary to take a lodger. But Mr. Micawber being in difficulties, all considerations of private feeling must give way."

I said, "Yes, ma'am."

"Mr. Micawber's difficulties are almost overwhelming just at present," said Mrs. Micawber; "and whether it is possible to bring him through them, I don't know."

I believe that he *was* in the Marines once upon a time. He was a sort of town traveller for a number of miscellaneous houses, now; but made little or nothing of it, I am afraid.

("If Mr. Micawber's creditors *will not* give him time," said Mrs. Micawber, "they must take the consequences; and the sooner they bring it to an issue the better. Blood cannot be obtained from stone, neither can anything on account be obtained at present (not to mention law expenses) from Mr. Micawber.")

Poor Mrs. Micawber! She said she had tried to exert herself; and so, I have no doubt, she had. The centre of the street-door was perfectly covered with a great brass-plate, on which was engraved "Mrs. Micawber's Boarding Establishment for Young Ladies": but I never found that any young lady had ever been to school there; or that any young lady ever came, or proposed to come; or that

the least preparation was ever made to receive any young lady. The only visitors I ever saw or heard of, were creditors. *They* used to come at all hours. At these times Mr. Micawber would be transported with grief and mortification, even to the length (as I was once made aware by a scream from his wife) of making motions at himself with a razor; but within half-an-hour afterwards, he would polish up his shoes with extraordinary pains, and go out, humming a tune with a greater air of gentility than ever. (Mrs. Micawber was quite as elastic. (I have known her to be thrown into fainting fits by the king's taxes at three o'clock, and to eat lamb-chops breaded, and drink warm ale (paid for with two tea-spoons that had gone to the pawnbroker's) at four.)

In this house, and with this family, I passed my leisure time. My own exclusive breakfast of a penny loaf and a pennyworth of milk, I provided myself; I kept another small loaf, and a modicum of cheese, on a particular shelf of a particular cupboard, to make my supper on when I came back at night. This made a hole in the six or seven shillings, I know well; and I was out at the warehouse all day, and had to support myself on that money all the week.

Mr. Micawber's difficulties were an addition to the distressed state of my mind. In my forlorn

state I became quite attached to the family. (I have known him come home to supper with a flood of tears, and a declaration that nothing was now left but a jail; and go to bed making a calculation of the expense of putting bow-windows to the house, "in case anything turned up," which was his favourite expression.) And Mrs. Micawber was just the same.

(At last Mr. Micawber's difficulties came to a crisis, and he was arrested early one morning, and carried over to the King's Bench Prison in the Borough. He told me, as he went out of the house, that the God of day had now gone down upon him—and I really thought his heart was broken and mine too.) But I heard, afterwards, that he was seen to play a lively game at skittles, before noon.

(In due time, Mr. Micawber was ordered to be discharged under the Insolvent Debtors' Act, to my great joy. His creditors were not implacable; and Mrs. Micawber informed me that they had declared in open court that they bore him no malice.)

I said to Mrs. Micawber immediately after this :

"May I ask, ma'am, what you and Mr. Micawber intend to do, now that Mr. Micawber is out of his difficulties, and at liberty? Have you settled yet?"

Mrs. Micawber replied, "My family are of

opinion, that, with a little interest, something might be done for a man of his ability in the Custom House. The influence of my family being local, it is their wish that Mr. Micawber should go down to Plymouth. They think it indispensable that he should be upon the spot."

"That he may be ready?" I suggested.

"Exactly," returned Mrs. Micawber. "That he may be ready, in case of anything turning up."

"And do you go too, ma'am?"

She shed tears as she replied:

"I never will desert Mr. Micawber. Mr. Micawber may have concealed his difficulties from me in the first instance, but his sanguine temper may have led him to expect that he would overcome them. The pearl necklace and bracelets which I inherited from mama, have been disposed of for less than half their value; and the set of coral, which was the wedding gift of my papa, has been actually thrown away for nothing. But I never will desert Mr. Micawber. No!" cried Mrs. Micawber, more affected than before, "I never will do it! It's of no use asking me!"

I felt quite uncomfortable—as if Mrs. Micawber supposed I had asked her to do anything of the sort!—and sat looking at her in alarm.

CHAPTER X

The Micawbers left soon after, and I too resolved to run away—to go, by some means or other, down into the country, to the only relation I had in the world, and tell my story to my aunt, Miss Betsey.

As I did not even know where Miss Betsey lived, I wrote a long letter to Peggotty, and asked her, incidentally, if she remembered. In the course of that letter, I told Peggotty that I had particular need of half a guinea.

Peggotty's answer soon arrived, and was, as usual, full of affectionate devotion. She enclosed the half-guinea, and told me that Miss Betsey lived near Dover. I deemed this enough for my object, and resolved to set out in quest of my aunt.

I left one Saturday, but was soon after robbed of my half-guinea by a long-legged youngman with an empty donkey-cart, whom I had engaged to carry my box to the coach office for transmission to Dover. I ran after him as fast as I could, but I had no breath to call out with. I narrowly escaped being run over, twenty times at least, in half a mile. Now I lost him, now I saw him, now I lost him, now I was cut at with a whip, now shouted at, now down in the mud, now up again, now running into

somebody's arms, now running headlong at a post. At length, confused by fright and heat, and doubting whether half London might not by this time be turning out for my apprehension, I left the young man to go where he would with my box and money; and, panting and crying, but never stopping, faced about for Greenwich, which I had understood was on the Dover Road. I had now only three half-pence with me, and yet I had no intention of coming back.

I trudged on miserably, though as fast as I could, until I happened to pass a little shop, where it was written up that ladies' and gentlemen's wardrobes were bought, and that the best price was given for rags, bones, and kitchen-stuff.

(My late experiences with Mr. and Mrs. Micawber suggested to me that here might be a means of keeping off the wolf for a little while.) I went up the next bye-street, took off my waist-coat, rolled it neatly under my arm, and came back to the shop-door, where it was sold for ninepence.

I foresaw pretty clearly that my jacket would go next, and that I should have to make the best of my way to Dover in a shirt and a pair of trousers, and might deem myself lucky if I got there even in that trim.

A plan had occurred to me for passing the night, which I was going to carry into execution.

This was, to lie behind the wall at the back of my old school which, I knew, was on the Dover Road.

It cost me some trouble to find out Salem House; but I found it, and I found a haystack in a corner, and I lay down by it.

(Sleep came upon me as it came on many other outcasts, against whom house-doors were locked, and house-dogs barked, that night—and I dreamed of lying on my old school-bed, talking to the boys in my room.) The warm beams of the sun, and the ringing of the getting-up bell at Salem House, awoke me next morning.)

I got, that Sunday, through three-and-twenty miles on the straight road, though not very easily, for I was new to that kind of toil.

Feeling next morning that I could go but a very little way that day, if I were to reserve any strength for getting to my journey's end, I resolved to make the sale of my jacket its principal business. It had to be sold, after a good deal of higgling, to a drunkard in a slop-shop for only sixteen pence.

At last I reached Dover and found out my Aunt's house after a good deal of enquiry. It was a very neat little cottage with cheerful bow-windows and a small square gravelled court or garden in front of it, full of flowers, carefully tended, and smelling deliciously. .

My shoes were by this time in a woeful

condition. My hat was crushed and bent. My shirt and trousers, stained with heat, dew, grass, and the Kentish soil on which I had slept, were torn besides. My hair had known no comb or brush since I left London. My face, neck, and hands, from unaccustomed exposure to the air and sun, were burnt to a berry-brown. In this plight, and with a strong consciousness of it, I waited to introduce myself to, and make my first impression on, my formidable aunt. -

Now there came out of the house a lady with her handkerchief tied over her cap, and a pair of gardening gloves on her hands, wearing a gardening pocket like a tollman's apron, and carrying a great knife. I knew her immediately to be Miss Betsey, for she came stalking out of the house exactly as my poor mother had so often described her stalking up our garden at Blunderstone Rookery.

I watched her, with my heart at my lips, as she marched to a corner of her garden, and stooped to dig up some little root there. (Then, without a scrap of courage, but with a great deal of desperation, I went softly in and stood beside her, touching her with my finger.) .

"If you please, ma'am," I began.

She started and looked up.

"If you please, aunt."

“ *Eh?* ” exclaimed Miss Betsey, in a tone of amazement I have never heard approached.

“ If you please, aunt, I am your nephew.”

“ Oh, Lord!” said my aunt. And sat flat down in the garden-path.

“ I am David Copperfield, of Blunderstone, in Suffolk—where you came, on the night when I was born, and saw my dear mama. I have been very unhappy since she died. I have been slighted, and taught nothing, and thrown upon myself, and put to work not fit for me. It made me run away to you. I was robbed at first setting out, and have walked all the way, and have never slept in a bed since I began the journey.”

My aunt, with every sort of expression but wonder discharged from her countenance, sat on the gravel, staring at me, until I began to cry; when she got up in a great hurry, collared me, and took me into the parlour. Her first proceeding there was to unlock a tall press, bring out several bottles, and pour some of the contents of each into my mouth. When she had administered these restoratives, as I was still quite hysterical, and unable to control my sobs, she put me on the sofa, with a shawl under my head.

After a time she rang the bell. “ Janet,” said my aunt, when her servant came in, “ Go upstairs, give my compliments to Mr. Dick, and say

"I wish to speak to him." Mr. Dick was a distant relation of hers, whom his brother's unkindness had thrown upon the charity of Miss Betsey. He was a good soul, but rather eccentric.

My aunt, with her hands behind her, walked up and down the room, until the gentleman came in laughing.

"Mr. Dick," said my aunt, "you have heard me mention David Copperfield?"

"Yes," he replied.

"Well, this is his boy, his son. He would be as like his father as it's possible to be, if he was not so like his mother, too."

"His son?" said Mr. Dick. "David's son? Indeed!"

"Yes," pursued my aunt, "and he has done a pretty piece of business. He has run away. Now, here you see young David Copperfield, and the question I put to you is, what shall I do with him?"

"What shall you do with him?" said Mr. Dick, feebly, scratching his head. "Oh! do with him?"

"Yes," said my aunt, with a grave look, and her forefinger held up. "Come! I want some very sound advice."

"Why, if I was you," said Mr. Dick, considering, and looking vacantly at me, "I should—"

The contemplation of me seemed to inspire him with a sudden idea, and he added, briskly, "I should wash him!")

"Janet," said my aunt, turning round with a quiet triumph, which I did not then understand, "Mr. Dick sets us all right. Heat the bath!"

Janet had gone away to get the bath ready, when my aunt, to my great alarm, became in one moment rigid with indignation, and had hardly voice to cry out, "Janet! Donkeys!"

Upon which, Janet came running up the stairs as if the house were in flames, darted out on a little piece of green in front, and warned off two saddle-donkeys, lady-ridden, that had presumed to set hoof upon it. The one great outrage of my aunt's life, demanding to be constantly avenged, was the passage of a donkey over that immaculate spot. (In whatever occupation she was engaged, however interesting to her the conversation in which she was taking part, a donkey turned the current of her ideas in a moment, and she was upon him straight.)

The bath was a great comfort. We dined soon after.

The cloth being drawn, and some sherry put upon the table (of which I had a glass), my aunt sent up for Mr. Dick again, who joined us, when she requested him to attend to my story; which she

elicited from me, gradually, by a course of questions.

After tea, we sat at the window, on the look-out, as I imagined, from my aunt's sharp expression of face, for more invaders—until dusk.

“ Now, Mr. Dick,” said my aunt, with her grave look, and her forefinger up as before, “ I am going to ask you another question. Look at this child.”

“ David's son?” said Mr. Dick, with an attentive, puzzled face.

“ Exactly so,” returned my aunt. “ What would you do with him, now?”

“ Do with David's son?” said Mr. Dick.

“ Ay,” replied my aunt, “ with David's son.”

“ Oh!” said Mr. Dick. “ Yes. Do with—I should put him to bed.”

“ Janet!” cried my aunt, with the same complacent triumph that I had remarked before. “ Mr. Dick sets us all right. If the bed is ready, we'll take the boy up to it.”

My aunt wrote to Mr. Murdstone about me, and in due course he replied, to my infinite terror, that he was coming to speak to her himself on the next day. On the next day, my aunt sat at work in the window, and I sat by, counting the time restlessly when she gave a sudden alarm of donkeys, and to my consternation and amazement, I beheld Miss

Murdstone, on a side-saddle, ride deliberately over the sacred piece of green, and stop in front of the house, looking about her.

“ Go along with you! ” cried my aunt, shaking her head and her fist at the window.

My aunt was exasperated by the coolness with which Miss Murdstone looked about her and I seized the opportunity to inform her who it was; and that the gentleman now coming near the offender (for the way up was very steep, and he had dropped behind), was Mr. Murdstone himself.

“ I don’t care who it is! ” cried my aunt, still shaking her head, and gesticulating anything but welcome from the bow-window. “ I won’t be trespassed upon. I won’t allow it. Go away! Janet, turn him round. Lead him off!” and I saw, from behind my aunt, a sort of hurried battle-piece, in which the donkey stood resisting everybody, with all his four legs planted different ways, while Janet tried to pull him round by the bridle, Mr. Murdstone tried to lead him on, Miss Murdstone struck at Janet with a parasol, and several boys, who had come to see the engagement, shouted vigorously.

Miss Murdstone, during the latter portion of the contest, had dismounted, and was now waiting with her brother at the bottom of the steps, until my aunt should be at leisure to receive them.

My aunt, a little ruffled by the combat, took no notice of their presence, until they were announced by Janet.

“ Shall I go away, aunt?” I asked, trembling.

“ No, sir,” said my aunt. “ Certainly not!” With which she pushed me into a corner near her, and fenced me in with a chair, as if it were a prison or a bar of justice. This position I continued to occupy during the whole interview, and from it I now saw Mr. and Miss Murdstone enter the room.

“ Oh!” said my aunt, “ I was not aware at first to whom I had the pleasure of objecting. But I don’t allow anybody to ride over that turf.”

“ Your regulation is rather awkward to strangers,” said Miss Murdstone.

“ Is it?” said my aunt.

Mr. Murdstone seemed afraid of a renewal of hostilities, and interposing began :

“ Miss Trotwood!”

“ I beg your pardon,” observed my aunt with a keen look. “ You are the Mr. Murdstone who married the widow of my late nephew, David Copperfield, of Blunderstone Rookery? ”

“ I am,” said Mr. Murdstone.

“ Janet,” said my aunt, ringing the bell, “ my compliments to Mr. Dick, and beg him to come down.”

Until he came, my aunt sat perfectly upright and stiff, frowning at the wall. When he came, my aunt performed the ceremony of introduction.

Mr. Dick stood among the group, with a grave and attentive expression of face. My aunt inclined her head to Mr. Murdstone, who went on :

“ This unhappy boy, Miss Trotwood, has been the occasion of much domestic trouble and uneasiness, both during the lifetime of my late dear wife, and since. He has a sullen, rebellious spirit; a violent temper; and an untoward, intractable disposition. Both my sister and myself have endeavoured to correct his vices, but ineffectually. I place this boy under the eye of a friend of my own, in a respectable business; it does not please him; he runs away from it; ‘makes himself a common vagabond about the country; and comes here, in rags, to appeal to you, Miss Trotwood.’ ”

“ But about the respectable business first,” said my aunt. “ If he had been your own boy, you would have put him to it, just the same, I suppose?”

“ If he had been my brother’s own boy,” returned Miss Murdstone, striking in, “ his character, I trust, would have been altogether different.”

“ And now, what have you got to say next?” said my aunt.

“ Merely this, Miss Trotwood,” he returned. “ I am here to take David back; to take him back unconditionally, to dispose of him as I think proper, and to deal with him as I think right. Is he ready to go? If he is not—and you tell me he is not—my doors are shut against him henceforth, and yours, I take it for granted, are open to him.”

“ And what does the boy say?” said my aunt. “ Are you ready to go, David?”

I answered “ No,” and entreated her not to let me go.

“ Mr. Dick,” said my aunt, “ what shall I do with this child?”

Mr. Dick considered, hesitated, brightened, and rejoined, “ Have him measured for a suit of clothes directly.”

She pulled me towards her and said to Mr. Murdstone :

“ You can go when you like; I’ll take my chance with the boy. If he’s all you say he is, at least I can do as much for him then, as you have done. But I don’t believe a word of it. Good-bye.”

“ You’ll consider yourself guardian, jointly with me, of this child, Mr. Dick,” said my aunt, after they had left.

“ I shall be delighted,” said Mr. Dick, “ to be the guardian of David’s son.”

"Very good," returned my aunt, "*that's settled*. I have been thinking, do you know, Mr. Dick, that I might call him Trotwood?"

"Yes, to be sure. Yes. 'Trotwood Copperfield,'" said Mr. Dick.

(Thus I began my new life, in a new name, and with everything new about me.)

CHAPTER XI

"Trot," said my aunt one evening.

"Should you like to go to school at Canterbury?"

I replied that I should like it very much, as it was so near her.

"Good," said my aunt. "Should you like to go to-morrow?"

I was not surprised by the suddenness of the proposal, and said, "Yes."

"Good," said my aunt again. "Janet, hire the grey pony and chaise to-morrow morning at ten o'clock, and pack up Master Trotwood's clothes to-night."

My aunt, who was perfectly indifferent to public opinion, drove the grey pony through Dover in a masterly manner, sitting high and stiff like a state coachman.

"Is it a large school, aunt?" I asked.

“ Why, I don’t know,” said my aunt. “ We are going to Mr. Wickfield’s first.”

“ Does *he* keep a school?” I asked.

“ No, Trot,” said my aunt. “ He keeps an office.”

At length we stopped before a very old house at Canterbury bulging out over the road.

When the pony-chaise stopped at the door, and my eyes were intent upon the house, I saw a cadaverous face appear at a small window on the ground floor and quickly disappear. The low arched door then opened, and the face came out. It belonged to a red-haired person—a youth of fifteen, as I take it now, but looking much older—whose hair was cropped as close as the closest stubble; who had hardly any eyebrows, and no eye-lashes. He was high-shouldered and bony; and had a long, lank, skeleton hand.

“ Is Mr. Wickfield at home, Uriah Heep?” said my aunt.

“ Mr. Wickfield’s at home, ma’am,” said Uriah Heep, “ if you’ll please to walk in there,” pointing with his long hand to the room he meant.

We got out, and went into his room.

“ Well, Miss Trotwood,” said Mr. Wickfield; for I soon found that it was he, and that he was a lawyer, and steward of the estates of a rich gentle-

man of the county; "what wind blows you here? Not an ill wind, I hope?"

"No," replied my aunt. "I have not come for any law."

"This is my grand-nephew," said my aunt.

"Wasn't aware you had one, Miss Trotwood," said Mr. Wickfield.

"I have adopted him," said my aunt, "and I have brought him here, to put him to a school where he may be thoroughly well taught, and well treated."

After a little discussion, he proposed to take my aunt to the best local school, that she might see it and judge for herself.

Though the advantages of the school were undeniable, my aunt did not approve of any of the boarding-houses proposed for me, and it was finally settled that I should stay with Mr. Wickfield for the present.

"Come and see my little housekeeper," said Mr. Wickfield.

We accordingly went up a wonderful old staircase into a prettily furnished room, with a piano and some lively furniture in red and green, and some flowers. On everything there was the same air of retirement and cleanliness that marked the house outside.

Mr. Wickfield tapped at a door in a corner of the panelled wall, and a girl of about my own age came quickly out and kissed him. On her face, I saw a placid and sweet expression that I never shall forget.

This was his little housekeeper, his daughter Agnes, Mr. Wickfield said. Mr. Wickfield had been a widower since her birth.

She listened to her father as he told her about me, with a pleasant face; and when he had concluded, proposed to my aunt that we should go upstairs and see my room. We all went together, she before us.

My aunt was as happy as I was in the arrangement made for me, and she left for Dover, without staying to dinner.

Next morning, after breakfast, I entered on school life again. I went, accompanied by Mr. Wickfield, to the scene of my future studies, and was introduced to my new master, Doctor Strong.

Whatever I had learnt, had so slipped away from me in the sordid cares of my life from day to night, that now, when I was examined about what I knew, I knew nothing, and was put into the lowest form of the school. I was much troubled by my want of book-learning.)

But there was such an influence in Mr. Wickfield's old house, that when I knocked at it, with

my new school-books under my arm, I began to feel my uneasiness softening away. Agnes had no opportunity of attending school, but was educated carefully at home. She could talk and play on the piano admirably. Once when I brought down my books, she looked into them, and showed me what she knew of them and what was the best way to learn and understand them.

Uriah was an articled clerk of Mr. Wickfield, and was of very industrious habits. Once I found him working hard late at night. "I suppose you are quite a great lawyer?" I said, after looking at him for some time.

"Me, Master Copperfield?" said Uriah. "Oh, no! I'm a very umble person. My mother is likewise a very umble person. We live in a numble abode, Master Copperfield, but have much to be thankful for. My father's former calling was umble. He was a sexton."

I asked Uriah if he had been with Mr. Wickfield long.

"I have been with him going on four year, Master Copperfield," said Uriah.

"Perhaps you'll be a partner in Mr. Wickfield's business, one of these days," I said, to make myself agreeable; "and it will be Wickfield and Heep, or Heep late Wickfield."

“ Oh no, Master Copperfield,” returned Uriah, shaking his head, “ I am much too umble for that! If you would come and see us, any afternoon, and take a cup of tea at our lowly dwelling, mother would be as proud of your company as I should be.”

I said I should be glad to come.

One morning, I met Uriah in the street. He reminded me of the promise I had made to take tea with him and his mother: adding, with a writhe, “ But I didn’t expect you to keep it! Master Copperfield, we’re so very umble.”

I really had not yet been able to make up my mind whether I liked Uriah or detested him; and I was very doubtful about it still. But I felt it quite an affront to be supposed proud.

So, at six o’clock that evening, which was one of the early office evenings, I announced myself as ready, to Uriah.

“ Mother will be proud, indeed,” he said, as we walked away together.

We entered a low, old-fashioned room, walked straight into from the street, and found there Mrs. Heep, who was the dead image of Uriah, only short. She received me with the utmost humility, and said, “ Uumble we are, umble we have been, umble we shall ever be. We know our station and are thankful in it.”

Presently they began to talk about aunts, and then I told them about mine; and about fathers and mothers, and then I told them about mine; and then Mrs. Heep began to talk about fathers-in-law, and then I began to tell her about mine; but stopped, because my aunt had advised me to observe silence on that subject. (They did just what they liked with me; and wormed things out of me that I had no desire to tell, with a certainty I blush to think of.)

I had begun to be a little uncomfortable, and to wish myself well out of the visit, when a figure walked in, exclaiming loudly, "Copperfield! Is it possible?"

It was Mr. Micawber who just happened to be passing that way.

I could do no less, under these circumstances, than make Mr. Micawber known to Uriah Heep and his mother; which I accordingly did.

"Ma'am," said Mr. Micawber to Mrs. Heep, with a bow, "you are very obliging. What are you doing, Copperfield? Still in the wine trade?"

I was excessively anxious to get Mr. Micawber away; and replied, with my hat in my hand, and a very red face, I have no doubt, that I was a pupil at Doctor Strong's.

"A pupil?" said Mr. Micawber, raising his eyebrows. "I am extremely happy to hear it."

“ Shall we go and see Mrs. Micawber, sir?”
I said, to get Mr. Micawber away.

“ If you will do her that favour, Copperfield,”
replied Mr. Micawber, rising.

“ Mr. Heep! Good evening. Mrs. Heep!
Your servant,” he said and then walked out with
me.

It was a little inn where Mr. Micawber put up,
and he occupied a small room in it. Here, recumbent on a small sofa, underneath a picture of a
race-horse, with her head close to the fire, was
Mrs. Micawber. She was amazed, but very glad
to see me.

“ I thought you were at Plymouth, ma’am,”
I said to Mrs. Micawber, as Mr. Micawber went
out. *

“ My dear Master Copperfield,” she replied,
“ we went to Plymouth. (But the truth is, talent
is not wanted in the Custom House. The local
influence of my family was quite unavailing to
obtain any employment in that department, for a
man of Mr. Micawber’s abilities.) In fact,
that branch of my family which is settled in
Plymouth became quite personal to Mr. Micaw-
ber, before we had been there a week. Under
such circumstances, we all came back to London.
Mr. Micawber was subsequently induced to
think that there might be an opening for

a man of his talent in the Medway Coal Trade. Then, as Mr. Micawber very properly said, the first step to be taken clearly was, to come and see the Medway. Which we came and saw. I say 'we,' Master Copperfield; for I never will," continued Mrs. Micawber with emotion, "I never will desert Mr. Micawber."

"We came," repeated Mrs. Micawber, "and saw the Medway. My opinion of the coal trade on that river is, that it may require talent, but that it certainly requires capital. Talent, Mr. Micawber has; capital, Mr. Micawber has not. We saw, I think, the greater part of the Medway; and that is my individual conclusion. Being so near here, Mr. Micawber was of opinion that it would be rash not to come on, and see the Cathedral. Firstly, on account of its being so well worth seeing, and our never having seen it; and secondly, on account of the great probability of something turning up in a cathedral town. We have been here, three days. Nothing has, as yet, turned up; and we are at present waiting for a remittance from London, to discharge our pecuniary obligations at this hotel."

I expressed my sincere sympathy for them and when I took my leave of them, they both pressed me to come and dine before they went away.

As I was looking out of the window that same evening, it surprised me, and made me rather

uneasy, to see Mr. Micawber and Uriah Heep walk past, arm in arm: Uriah humbly sensible of the honour that was done him, and Mr. Micawber taking a bland delight in extending his patronage to Uriah.

I dined with the Micawbers next evening, and I never saw anybody so thoroughly jovial as Mr. Micawber was, down to the very last moment of the evening, when I took a hearty farewell of himself and his amiable wife. Consequently, I was not prepared, at seven o'clock next morning, to receive the following communication, dated half-past nine in the evening, a quarter of an hour after I had left him:—

“ MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

‘The die is cast—all is over. Hiding the ravages of care with a sickly mask of mirth, I have not informed you, this evening, that there is no hope of the remittance!’) Under these circumstances, alike humiliating to endure, humiliating to contemplate, and humiliating to relate, I have discharged the pecuniary liability contracted at this establishment, by giving a note of hand, made payable fourteen days after date, at my residence, Pentonville, London. (When it becomes due, it will not be taken up. The result is destruction. The bolt is impending, and the tree must fall.’

“ Let the wretched man who now addresses you, my dear Copperfield, be a beacon to you through life. He writes with that intention, and in that hope. If he could think himself of so much use, one gleam of day might, by possibility, penetrate into the cheerless dungeon of his remaining existence—though his longevity is, at present (to say the least of it), extremely problematical.

“ This is the last communication, my dear Copperfield, you will ever receive

“ From

“ The

“ Beggared Outcast,

“ WILKINS MICAWBER.”

CHAPTER XII

When I left school, my aunt and I held many grave deliberations on the calling to which I should be devoted. At last it was settled that I should be a proctor. Miss Betsey took me to the office of Messrs. Spenlow and Jorkins in Doctors' Commons. Mr. Spenlow informed us that the premium was a thousand pounds. I could begin my month's probation, however, whenever I pleased. My aunt took for me a furnished set of chambers in the Adelphi. I was delighted with the place. Mrs. Crupp was to be my cook, and expressly intimated that she

should always yearn towards me as a son. One morning I received here a note from Agnes inviting me to see her at the house of her father's agent, Mr. Waterbrook, in Ely-place, Holborn. When I met her, she asked me if I had seen Uriah.

"Uriah Heep?" said I. "No. Is he in London?"

"He comes to the office down-stairs, every day," returned Agnes. "He was in London a week before me, I am afraid, on disagreeable business, Trotwood."

"On some business that makes you uneasy, Agnes, I see," said I. "What can that be?"

"I believe he is going to enter into partnership with papa."

"What? Uriah? That mean, fawning fellow, worm² himself into such promotion!" I cried, indignantly.

("Uriah," she replied, after a moment's hesitation, "has made himself indispensable to papa. He is subtle and watchful. He has mastered papa's weaknesses, fostered them, and taken advantage of them, until—to say all that I mean in a word, Trotwood—until papa is afraid of him.")

Mrs. Waterbrook invited me to dinner next day, and when I came, I found Uriah Heep among the company, in a suit of black, and in deep humility. He told me, when I shook hands with

him, that he was proud to be noticed by me. There were other guests. (But there was one who attracted my attention before he came in, on account of my hearing him announced as Mr. Traddles! My mind flew back to Salem House.)

After dinner I was very glad indeed to get upstairs to Agnes, and to talk with her in a corner, and to introduce Traddles to her. He was shy, but agreeable, and the same good-natured creature still. As he was obliged to leave early, on account of going away next morning for a month, I had not nearly so much conversation with him as I could have wished; but we exchanged addresses,* and promised ourselves the pleasure of another meeting when he should come back to town.

I remained until all the company were gone. Conversing with Agnes, and hearing her sing, was such a delightful reminder to me of my happy life in the grave old house she had made so beautiful, that I could have remained there half the night; (but, having no excuse for staying any longer, when the lights of Mr. Waterbrook's society were all snuffed out, I took my leave very much against my inclination.)

Uriah was close behind me when I went downstairs. I asked him if he would come home to my rooms, and have some coffee.

"O, really, Master Copperfield," he rejoined.

—“ I beg your pardon, Mister Copperfield, but the other comes so natural,—(I don't like that you should put a constraint upon yourself to ask a numble person like me to your ouse.”)

“ There is no constraint in the case,” said I.
“ Will you come? ”

“ I should like to, very much,” replied Uriah, with a writhe.

“ Well, then, come along!” said I.

“(You have heard something, I des-say, of a change in my expectations, Master Copperfield,—I should say, Mister Copperfield? ”)observed Uriah.

“ Yes,” said I, “ something.”

“ Ah! I thought Miss Agnes would know of it!” he quietly returned. “ I'm glad to find Miss Agnes knows of it. Oh, thank you, Master—Mister Copperfield!”

(I could have thrown my bootjack at him (it lay ready on the rug), for having entrapped me into the disclosure of anything concerning Agnes, however immaterial. But I only drank my coffee.)

“ What a prophet you have shown yourself, Mister Copperfield!” pursued Uriah. “ Dear me, what a prophet you have proved yourself to be! Don't you remember saying to me once, that perhaps I should be a partner in Mr. Wickfield's business, and perhaps it might be Wickfield and Heep? You may not recollect it; but when a

person is umble, Master Copperfield, a person treasures such things up! "

" I recollect talking about it," said I, " though I certainly did not think it very likely then."

" Oh! who *would* have thought it likely, Mister Copperfield! " returned Uriah, enthusiastically. " I am sure I didn't myself. I recollect saying with my own lips that I was much too umble. So I considered myself really and truly."

He sat, with that carved grin on his face, looking at the fire, as I looked at him.

" But the umblest persons, Master Copperfield," he presently resumed, " may be the instruments of good. I am glad to think I have been the instrument of good to Mr. Wickfield, and that I may be more so. Oh, what a worthy man he is, Mister Copperfield, but how imprudent he has been! "

" I am sorry to hear it," said I. I could not help adding, rather pointedly, " on all accounts."

" Decidedly so, Mister Copperfield," replied Uriah. " On all accounts. Miss Agnes's above all! You don't remember your own eloquent expressions, Master Copperfield; but *I* remember how you said one day that everybody must admire her, and how I thanked you for it! "

" Uumble as I am," he wiped his hands harder, and looked at them and at the fire by turns,

“umble as my mother is, and lowly as our poor but honest roof has ever been, the image of Miss Agnes (I don’t mind trusting you with my secret, Master Copperfield, for I have always overflowed towards you since the first moment I had the pleasure of beholding you in a pony-shay) has been in my breast for years. Oh, Master Copperfield, with what a pure affection do I love the ground my Agnes walks on!”

(I believe I had a delirious idea of seizing the red-hot poker out of the fire, and running him through with it.) (It went from me with a shock, like a ball fired from a rifle: but the image of Agnes, outraged by so much as a thought of this red-headed animal’s, remained in my mind (when I looked at him, sitting all awry as if his mean soul griped his body), and made me giddy.) (He seemed to swell and grow before my eyes; the room seemed full of the echoes of his voice; and the strange feeling (to which, perhaps, no one is quite a stranger) that all this had occurred before, at some indefinite time, and that I knew what he was going to say next, took possession of me.)

A timely observation of the sense of power that there was in his face, did more to bring back to my remembrance the entreaty of Agnes, in its full force, than any effort I could have made.) I asked him, with a better appearance of composure than

I could have thought possible a minute before, whether he had made his feelings known to Agnes.

“ Oh no, Master Copperfield ! ” he returned ;
“ oh dear, no ! Not to any one but you. You see I am only just emerging from my lowly station. I rest a good deal of hope on her observing how useful I am to her father (for I trust to be very useful to him indeed, Master Copperfield), and how I smooth the way for him, and keep him straight. She’s so much attached to her father, Master Copperfield (oh what a lovely thing it is in a daughter !), that I think she may come, on his account, to be kind to me.”

I fathomed the depth of the rascal’s whole scheme, and understood why he laid it bare.)

CHAPTER XIII

1.
Mr. Spenlow was a widower with only one child—a daughter. After I had been articled, he invited me to spend a week-end with him. We left the office one Saturday evening in his phaeton, and soon reached his house at Norwood with a beautiful *garden and a lawn.*

“ Where is Miss Dora ? ” said Mr. Spenlow to the servant. “ Dora ! ” I thought. “ What a beautiful name ! ”

We turned into a room near at hand and I heard a voice say, " Mr. Copperfield, my daughter Dora, and my daughter Dora's confidential friend! " It was, no doubt, Mr. Spenlow's voice, but I didn't know it and I didn't care whose it was. (All was over in a moment. I had fulfilled my destiny. I was a captive and a slave. I loved Dora Spenlow to distraction!)

(She was more than human to me. She was a Fairy, a Sylph!)

" I," observed a well-remembered voice, when I had bowed and murmured something, " have seen Mr. Copperfield before."

The speaker was not Dora. No; the confidential friend, Miss Murdstone!

I said, " How do you do, Miss Murdstone? I hope you are well." She answered, " Very well." I said, " How is Mr. Murdstone? " She replied, " My brother is robust, I am obliged to you."

Mr. Spenlow, who, I suppose, had been surprised to see us recognise each other, then put in his word.

" I am glad to find," he said, " Copperfield, that you and Miss Murdstone are already acquainted."

" Mr. Copperfield and myself," said Miss Murdstone, with severe composure, " are

connexions. We were once slightly acquainted. Circumstances have separated us since."

It did not occur to me to mention before this that I had a letter from Peggotty while I was at Dover, telling me that there had been a sale of the furniture at our old home, and that Mr. and Miss Murdstone had gone away.

We had a quiet Sunday, and departed early next morning, and I had the melancholy pleasure of taking off my hat to Dora in the phaeton, as she stood on the door-step with Jip, her little dog, in her arms.

"I am delighted to see *you*, Copperfield," said Traddles when I called on him next day.

"You are reading for the bar, Mr. Waterbrook informed me?" said I.

"Why, yes," said Traddles, rubbing his hands, slowly over one another, "I am reading for the bar. The fact is, I have just begun to keep my terms, after rather a long delay. It's some time since I was articled, but the payment of that hundred pounds was a great pull. A great pull!" said Traddles, with a wince, as if he had had a tooth out.

"You were brought up by an uncle?" said I.

"Of course I was!" said Traddles. "Yes, I had an uncle. He died soon after I left school, and I wasn't provided for."

"Did you get nothing, Traddles, after all?"

" Oh dear, yes! " said Traddles. " I got fifty pounds. I had never been brought up to any profession, and at first I was at a loss what to do for myself. However, I began, with the assistance of the son of a professional man to copy law writings. Fortunately, I soon became acquainted with a person in the publishing way, who was getting up an Encyclopædia, and he set me to work; and, indeed " (glancing at his table), " I am at work for him at this minute. So, by little and little, and not living high, I managed to scrape up the hundred pounds at last. Now, Copperfield, you are so exactly what you used to be, with that agreeable face, and it's so pleasant to see you, that I sha'n't conceal anything. Therefore you must know that I am engaged. Sophy is a curate's daughter; one of ten, down in Devonshire. She is the dearest girl, but our motto is ' Wait and Hope! ' This is the end of my prosing about myself, I get on as well as I can. I don't make much, but I don't spend much. In general, I board with the people down-stairs, who are very agreeable people indeed. Both Mr. and Mrs. Micawber have seen a good deal of life, and are excellent company."

" Mr. and Mrs. Micawber! " I repeated. " Why, I am intimately acquainted with them! "

I begged Traddles to ask his landlord to walk

up, and Mr. Micawber came into the room with a genteel and youthful air. Nothing had yet 'turned up,' and Mr. Micawber was in want as before. Yet he insisted on my staying to dinner, but I declined the invitation.

Mr. Spenlow once invited me to join a little picnic on the occasion of Dora's birthday. My happiness knew no bounds, and I rode to Norwood in the morning. Dora was sitting on a garden seat under a lilac tree, upon that beautiful morning, among the butterflies, in a white chip bonnet and a dress of celestial blue!

"You'll be glad to hear, Mr. Copperfield," said Dora when she saw me, "that that cross Miss Murdstone is not here. She has gone to her brother's marriage, and will be away at least three weeks. Isn't that delightful?"

I said I was sure it must be delightful to her, and all that was delightful to her was delightful to me.

Mr. Spenlow now came out of the house, and we all walked from the lawn towards the carriage, which was getting ready. It was to take the party out of town.

I shall never have such a ride again.

I don't know as yet where we went. It was a 'green spot, on a hill, carpeted with soft turf.

There were shady trees, and heather, and, as far as the eye could see, a rich landscape.

We all unpacked our baskets, and employed ourselves in getting dinner ready.

After dinner Dora's health was drunk. When I drank it, I affected to interrupt my conversation for that purpose. I caught Dora's eye as I bowed to her, and I thought it looked appealing.

I was happier than ever when the party broke up. I returned to London the same evening, but paid another visit to Dora soon after, and Dora and I were engaged. I wrote a long letter to Agnes, in which I tried to make her comprehend how blest I was, and what a darling Dora was.

But Dora stipulated that we were never to be married without her papa's consent, and were to keep our secret from Mr. Spenlow for the present.

CHAPTER XIV

About this time Traddles called one day, and I enquired how Mr. Micawber was. He said, "He is quite well, thank you. I am not living with him at present. He has changed his name to Mortimer, in consequence of his temporary embarrassments; and he won't come out till after dark—and then in spectacles. (There was an execution put into our house, for rent.) Within

a week another execution came in. It broke up the establishment. I have been living in a furnished apartment since then, and the Mortimers have been very private indeed." I was shocked to hear this.

But a much greater shock was in store for me. I went out one evening with Traddles and Peggotty, who had been living with me since her husband's death. (When I returned to my sitting-room, (I found my Aunt sitting on a quantity of luggage, with her two birds before her, and her cat on her knee, like a female Robinson Crusoe,) drinking tea, and Mr. Dick standing thoughtfully, with more luggage piled about him!)

"My dear aunt!" cried I. "Why, what an unexpected pleasure!"

We cordially embraced; and Mr. Dick and I cordially shook hands.

(I knew my aunt sufficiently well to know that she had something of importance on her mind, and that there was far more matter in this arrival than a stranger might have supposed.) I noticed how her eye lighted on me, when she thought my attention otherwise occupied.

As I knew she would only speak in her own good time, I sat down near her.

"Trot," said my aunt at last, when she had finished her tea, and carefully smoothed down her

dress, and wiped her lips, "have you got to be firm and self-reliant?"

"I hope so, aunt."

"Then why, my love," said my aunt, looking earnestly at me, "why do you think I prefer to sit upon this property of mine to-night?"

I shook my head, unable to guess.

"Because," said my aunt, "it's all I have. Because I'm ruined, my dear!"

(If the house, and every one of us, had tumbled out into the river together, I could hardly have received a greater shock.)

"Dick knows it," said my aunt, laying her hand calmly on my shoulder. "I am ruined, my dear Trot! All I have in the world is in this room, except the cottage; and that I have left Janet to let."

I tried to ascertain whether Mr. Dick had any understanding of the causes of this sudden and great change in my aunt's affairs. As I might have expected, he had none at all. (My aunt, on the other hand, was in a composed frame of mind, which was a lesson to all of us.)

I soon came to the conclusion that the first step I ought to take was to try if my articles could be cancelled and the premium recovered.

I arrived at the office very early and sat down in my shady corner, looking up at the sunlight on

the opposite chimney-pots, and thinking about Dora, until Mr. Spenlow came in, crisp and curly.

“How are you, Copperfield?” said he. “Fine morning!”

“Beautiful morning, sir,” said I. “Could I say a word to you before you go into Court?”

“By all means,” said he. “Come into my room.”

I followed him into his room, and he began putting on his gown, and touching himself up before a little glass he had, hanging inside a closet door.

“I am sorry to say,” said I, “that I have some rather disheartening intelligence from my aunt.”

“No!” said he. “Dear me! Not paralysis, I hope?”

“It has no reference to her health, sir,” I replied. “She has met with some large losses. In fact, she has very little left, indeed.”

“You as-tound me, Copperfield!” cried Mr. Spenlow.

I shook my head. “Indeed, sir,” said I, “her affairs are so changed, that I wished to ask you whether it would be possible—at a sacrifice on our part of some portion of the premium, of course,” I put in this, on the spur of the moment,

warned by the blank expression of his face—"to cancel my articles?"

What it cost me to make this proposal, nobody knows.

"To cancel your articles, Copperfield? Cancel? I am extremely sorry, Copperfield. It is not usual to cancel articles for any such reason. It is not a professional course of proceeding. It is not a convenient precedent at all."

I saw with sufficient clearness that the recovery of my aunt's thousand pounds was out of the question. In a state of despondency, which I remember with anything but satisfaction, I left the office, and went homeward.

I was trying to familiarise my mind with the worst, and to present to myself the arrangements we should have to make for the future in their sternest aspect, when a hackney chariot, coming after me, and stopping at my very feet, occasioned me to look up.

"Agnes!" I joyfully exclaimed. "Oh, my dear Agnes, of all people in the world, what a pleasure to see you!"

"Is it, indeed?" she said, in her cordial voice.

The day being very fine, she was glad to come out of the chariot. I dismissed the coachman, and she took my arm, and we walked on together. She was like Hope embodied, to me.

My aunt had written to her that she had fallen into adversity, and was leaving Dover for good. Agnes had come to London to see my aunt, between whom and herself there had been a mutual liking these many years; indeed, it dated from the time of my taking up my residence in Mr. Wickfield's house. She was not alone, she said. Her papa was with her—and Uriah Heep.

“And now they are partners,” said I. “Confound him!”

“Yes,” said Agnes. “They have some business here; and I took advantage of their coming, to come too. You must not think my visit all friendly and disinterested, Trotwood, for—I am afraid I may be cruelly prejudiced—I do not like to let papa go away alone, with him.”

“Does he exercise the same influence over Mr. Wickfield still, Agnes?”

Agnes shook her head. “There is such a change at home,” said she, “that you would scarcely know the dear old house. They live with us now.”

“They?” said I.

“Mr. Heep and his mother. He sleeps in your old room,” said Agnes.

We found my aunt alone, in a state of some excitement. She told us how her financial ruin ~~was~~ caused by injudicious investment made without

the knowledge of Agnes's father—her “man of business.”

“Dear Miss Trotwood, is that all the history?” said Agnes.

“I hope it's enough, child,” said my aunt.

Agnes had listened at first with suspended breath. Her colour still came and went, but now she breathed more freely. (I thought I knew why. I thought she had had some fear that her unhappy father might be in some way to blame for what had happened.) My aunt took her hand in hers, and laughed.

(“Is that all?” repeated my aunt. “Why, yes, that's all, except, ‘And she lived happy ever afterwards.’”)

“To say, aunt,” I interposed, “that I must do something!”

“I have been thinking, Trotwood,” said Agnes, diffidently, “that if you had time——”

“I have a good deal of time, Agnes. I am always disengaged after four or five o'clock, and I have time early in the morning.”

Agnes said, “Doctor Strong has acted on his intention of retiring, and has come to live in London; and he has asked papa, I know, if he could recommend him a secretary. Don't you think he would rather have his favourite old pupil near him, than anybody else?”

“ Dear Agnès!” said I. “ What should I do without you! You are always my good angel. I told you so. I never think of you in any other light.”

I sat down and wrote a letter to the Doctor, stating my object, and appointing to call on him next day at ten in the forenoon.

A knock now came at the door.

“ I think,” said Agnes, turning pale, “ it’s papa. He promised me that he would come.”

I opened the door, and admitted, not only Mr. Wickfield, but also Uriah Heep. I had not seen Mr. Wickfield for some time. I was prepared for a great change in him, after what I had heard from Agnes, but his appearance shocked me.

There was an unwholesome ruddiness upon his face; his eyes were full and bloodshot; and there was a nervous trembling in his hand.

Agnes softly said to him, “ Papa! Here is Miss Trotwood—and Trotwood, whom you have not seen for a long while!” and then he approached, and constrainedly gave my aunt his hand, and shook hands more cordially with me. As I now looked at Uriah Heep, I saw his countenance form itself into a most ill-favoured smile. Agnes saw it too, I think, for she shrank from him.

“Uriah Heep is a great relief to me,” said Mr. Wickfield, in a dull voice. “It’s a load off my mind, Trotwood, to have such a partner.”

(The red fox made him say all this, I knew. What struck me most was, that with the evidence of his native superiority still upon him, he should submit himself to that crawling impersonation of meanness, Uriah Heep.)

Heep had an engagement and parted from us. Mr. Wickfield, left to Agnes, soon became more like his former self, though there was a settled depression upon him, which he never shook off. For all that, he brightened.

CHAPTER XV

Dr. Strong gladly appointed me his Secretary. His only regret was that he could not pay me more than £70 a year.

I was pretty busy now; up at five in the morning, and home at nine or ten at night. But I had infinite satisfaction in being so closely engaged, and never walked slowly on any account, and felt enthusiastically that the more I tired myself, the more I was doing to deserve Dora.

Burning with impatience to do something more, I went to see Traddles.

Many men, I had heard, had begun life as reporters to newspapers, and I asked him how

I could qualify myself for the pursuit of reporting the debates in Parliament. Traddles now informed me that a perfect and entire command of the mystery of short-hand writing and reading, was about equal in difficulty to the mastery of six languages; and that it might perhaps be attained, by dint of perseverance, in the course of a few years.

"I am very much obliged to you, my dear Traddles!" said I. "I'll begin to-morrow."

"Dear me," said Traddles, "I had no idea you were such a determined character, Copperfield!"

We were invited once again to Mr. Micawber's lodgings, and were glad to find this time that Mr. Micawber had got rid of his dust and ashes, and that something really had turned up at last.

He was arranging to leave for Canterbury, and said, "My dear Copperfield, I have entered into arrangements, by virtue of which I stand pledged and contracted to our friend Heep, to assist and serve him in the capacity of—and to be—his confidential clerk."

I stared at Mr. Micawber, who greatly enjoyed my surprise.

"Of my friend Heep," continued Mr. Micawber, "who is a man of remarkable shrewdness, I desire to speak with all possible respect. (My friend

Heep has not fixed the positive remuneration at too high a figure, but he has made a great deal, in the way of extrication from the pressure of pecuniary difficulties, contingent on the value of my services; and on the value of those services I pin my faith."

"(What I particularly request Mr. Micawber to be careful of, is," said Mrs. Micawber, "that he does not, my dear Mr. Copperfield, in applying himself to this subordinate branch of the law, place it out of his power to rise, ultimately, to the top of the tree.")

"My dear," observed Mr. Micawber—but glancing inquisitively at Traddles, too, "we have time enough before us, for the consideration of those questions."

"Micawber," she returned, "no! (Your mistake in life is, that you do not look forward far enough. You are bound, in justice to your family, if not to yourself, to take in at a comprehensive glance the extremest point in the horizon to which your abilities may lead you.)"

Mr. Micawber coughed, and drank his punch with an air of exceeding satisfaction—still glancing at Traddles, as if he desired to have his opinion.

I did not allow my resolution, with respect to the Parliamentary Debates, to cool. I bought an approved scheme of the noble art and mystery of stenography (which cost me ten and sixpence), and

plunged into a sea of perplexity that brought me, in a few weeks, to the confines of distraction.

(My struggles might have been quite heart-breaking, but for Dora, who was the stay and anchor of my tempest-driven bark.) In three or four months, however, I was in a condition to make an experiment on one of our crack speakers in the Commons.

One day, when I went to the Commons as usual, I found Mr. Spenlow in the doorway, looking extremely grave, and talking to himself.

Instead of returning my "Good-morning" with his usual affability, he looked at me in a distant, ceremonious manner, and coldly requested me to accompany him to a certain coffee-house, which had a door opening into the Commons. I complied, in a very uncomfortable state, and my mind misgave me that he had found out about my darling Dora.

If I had not guessed this, on the way to the coffee-house, I could hardly have failed to know what the matter was when I followed him into an up-stairs room, and found Miss Murdstone there.

"Have the goodness to show Mr. Copperfield," said Mr. Spenlow, "what you have in your reticule, Miss Murdstone."

I believe it was the old identical steel-clasped reticule of my childhood, that shut up like a bite.

Compressing her lips, in sympathy with the snap, Miss Murdstone opened it and produced my last letter to Dora, teeming with expressions of devoted affection.

“ I believe that is your writing, Mr. Copperfield?” said Mr. Spenlow.

I was very hot, and the voice I heard was very unlike mine, when I said, “ It is, sir!”

“ If I am not mistaken,” said Mr. Spenlow, as Miss Murdstone brought a parcel of letters out of her reticule, tied round with the dearest bit of blue ribbon, “ those are also from your pen, Mr. Copperfield?”

(I took them from her with a most desolate sensation.

“ No, thank you!” said Mr. Spenlow, coldly, as I mechanically offered them back to him. “ I will not deprive you of them.” Miss Murdstone, be so good as to proceed!”

She narrated how she had snatched my last letter from Jip who was playing with it, and obtained the packet subsequently from Dora who was taxed with having many more letters in her possession. Mr. Spenlow told me that the correspondence must come to an end; or he would disinherit Dora. He gave me a week to think over the matter.

When I got to the office, and sat at my desk, in my own particular nook, thinking of this earth-

quake that had taken place so unexpectedly, and in the bitterness of my spirit cursing Jip, I fell into such a state of torment about Dora, that I wonder I did not take up my hat and rush insanely to Norwood. The idea of their frightening her, and making her cry, and of my not being there to comfort her, was so excruciating, that it impelled me to write a wild letter to Mr. Spenlow, beseeching him not to visit upon her the consequences of my awful destiny. This letter I sealed and laid upon his desk before he returned; and when he came in, I saw him, through the half-opened door of his room, take it up and read it.

He said nothing about it all the morning; but before he went away in the afternoon, he called me in, and told me that he believed he was an indulgent father (as indeed he was), and I might spare myself any solicitude on her account.

CHAPTER XVI

An unexpected calamity now befalls Dora; Mr. Spenlow dies suddenly while driving home from town. She is overwhelmed with grief, and goes to live with her two aunts—Miss Lavinia and Miss Clarissa—maiden sisters of Mr. Spenlow. They refuse to recognise that Dora and I are

positively engaged, but agree to let me visit her twice a week.

Once again, let me pause upon a memorable period of my life. :

I have come legally to man's estate. I have attained the dignity of twenty-one.

I have tamed that savage stenographic mystery. I make a respectable income by it, and am joined with eleven others in reporting the debates in Parliament for a morning newspaper.

I have taken with fear and trembling to authorship. I wrote a little something, in secret, and sent it to a magazine, and it was published in the magazine. Now, I am regularly paid for my articles. Altogether, I am well off.

We have removed to a pleasant little cottage. My aunt, however (who has sold the house at Dover, to good advantage), is not going to remain here, but intends removing herself to a still more tiny cottage close at hand. What does this portend? My marriage? Yes!

Yes! I am going to be married to Dora! Miss Lavinia and Miss Clarissa have given their consent. Sophy arrives at the house of Dora's aunts, in due course, and Traddles presents her, with great pride, to us as well as to Agnes, whom I have brought from the Canterbury coach. Agnes has a great liking for Traddles, and it is capital to see them

meet. I fetch my aunt from her tiny cottage. We drive to the church in an open coach. (The rest is all a more or less incoherent dream : a dream of their coming in with Dora; of our kneeling down together, side by side; of Dora's trembling less and less; of the service being got through, quietly and gravely; of my walking so proudly and lovingly down the aisle with my sweet wife upon my arm.)

The honeymoon being over, I found myself sitting down in my own small house with Dora. But we felt our inexperience of house-keeping, and had our little quarrels. Whenever I had unknowingly wounded Dora's soft little heart, she was so pathetic in her sobbing and bewailing that I felt miserable. But my little wife was in such affliction when she thought that I was annoyed, and in such a state of joy when she found that I was not, that my misery quickly vanished.

(“ These are early days, Trot,” my aunt once observed, “ and Rome was not built in a day, nor in a year.) You have chosen freely for yourself ” ; a cloud passed over her face for a moment, I thought ; “ and you have chosen a very pretty and a very affectionate creature.) It will be your duty, and it will be your pleasure too, to estimate her (as you chose her) by the qualities she has, and not by the qualities she may not have. The latter you must develop in her, if you can.”

“ I am very sorry,” Dora once said. “ Will you try to teach me, Doady? ”

“ I must teach myself first, Dora,” said I. “ I am as bad as you.”

“ Ah! But you can learn,” she returned: “ and you are a clever, clever man! ”

“ Nonsense!” said I.

“ I wish,” resumed my wife, after a long silence, “ that I could have gone down into the country for a whole year, and lived with Agnes! ”

“ Why so? ” I asked.

“ I think she might have improved me, and I think I might have learned from *her*,” said Dora.

“ All in good time.”

“ Will you call me a name I want you to call me? ” inquired Dora, without moving.

“ What is it? ” I asked with a smile.

“ It’s a stupid name,” she said, shaking her curls for a moment. “ Child-wife.”

Thus it was that I took upon myself the toils and cares of our life, and had no partner in them. We lived much as before, in reference to our scrambling household arrangements; but I had got used to them, and Dora, I was pleased to see, was seldom vexed now. She was bright and cheerful in the old childish way, loved me dearly, and was happy with her old trifles. I had no suspicion then that her health was failing.

CHAPTER XVII

I received one morning a letter, dated Canterbury, from Mr. Micawber, in which he asked me for an interview near the King's Bench prison. I read the letter over several times. Making due allowance for Mr. Micawber's lofty style of composition, and for the extraordinary relish with which he sat down and wrote long letters on all possible and impossible occasions, I still believed that something important lay hidden at the bottom of his roundabout communication. My impression was confirmed when I consulted Traddles who had received a letter from Mrs. Micawber, complaining of a sort of mental agitation from which her husband had been suffering of late. We therefore agreed to see him punctually at the appointed place.

"Oh, you are in low spirits, Mr. Micawber," said Traddles, when we met him.

"I am, sir," interposed Mr. Micawber.

"I hope," said Traddles, "it is not because you have conceived a dislike to the law—for I am a lawyer myself, you know."

Mr. Micawber answered not a word.

"How is our friend Heep, Mr. Micawber?" said I, after a silence.

“ My dear Copperfield,” returned Mr. Micawber, bursting into a state of much excitement, and turning pale. (“ You will allow me, as a private individual, to decline pursuing a subject which has lashed me to the utmost verge of desperation in my professional capacity.”)

“ Take me,” continued Mr. Micawber impatiently, “ down a turning, for, upon my soul, in my present state of mind I am not equal to this! ”

We walked on arm-in-arm and went to my aunt’s house rather than to mine, because of Dora’s illness. Miss Trotwood presented herself on being sent for, and welcomed Mr. Micawber with gracious cordiality. Mr. Micawber kissed her hand and retired to the window.

“ Madam,” said Mr. Micawber after a few minutes, “ I wish I had had the honour of knowing you at an earlier period. I was not always the wreck you at present behold.”

“ I hope Mrs. Micawber and your family are well, sir,” said my aunt.

Mr. Micawber inclined his head. “ They are as well, ma’am,” he desperately observed, after a pause, “ as Aliens and Outcasts can ever hope to be.”

“ Lord bless you, sir! ” exclaimed my aunt in her abrupt way. “ What are you talkin’ about?”

"The subsistence of my family, ma'am," returned Mr. Micawber, "trembles in the balance. My employer——"

Here Mr. Micawber provokingly left off.

"Mr. Micawber," said I, "what is the matter? Pray speak out. You are among friends."

"Among friends, sir!" repeated Mr. Micawber; and all he had reserved came breaking out of him. "Good heavens, it is principally because I *am* among friends that my state of mind is what it is. What is the matter, gentlemen? What is *not* the matter? (Villainy is the matter; baseness is the matter; deception, fraud, conspiracy, are the matter; and the name of the whole atrocious mass is—HEEP!)"

My aunt clapped her hands, and we all started up as if we were possessed.

I never saw a man so hot in my life. I tried to calm him, that we might come to something rational; but he got hotter and hotter, and wouldn't hear a word.

"I'll put my hand in no man's hand," said Mr. Micawber, gasping, puffing, and sobbing, to that degree that he was like a man fighting with cold water, "until I have—blown to fragments—the—a—detestable—serpent—HEEP! (I'll partake of no one's hospitality, until I have—a—moved

Mount Vesuvius—to eruption—on—a—the abandoned rascal—HELP!”)

With this last repetition of the magic word that had kept him going at all, Mr. Micawber rushed out of the house; leaving us in a state of excitement, hope and wonder, that reduced us to a condition little better than his own. Immediately after a note was brought to me, in which Mr. Micawber requested us all to meet him at his old hotel in Canterbury, where he proposed to expose the misdeeds of Heep. Accordingly we four, that is to say, my aunt, Mr. Dick, Traddles, and I, went down to Canterbury, and Mr. Micawber appeared at the hotel when we had sat down to breakfast.

(“ Now, sir,” said my aunt to Mr. Micawber, as she put on her gloves, (“ we are ready for Mount Vesuvius, or anything else, as soon as *you* please.”))

“ Madam,” returned Mr. Micawber, “ I trust you will shortly witness an eruption. Mr. Traddles, I have your permission, I believe, to mention here that we have been in communication together? ”

“ It is undoubtedly the fact, Copperfield,” said Traddles, to whom I looked in surprise.

“ Mr. Copperfield,” continued Mr. Micawber, “ I would beg to be allowed a start of five minutes by the clock, and then to receive the present company, inquiring for Miss Wickfield, at the office of

Wickfield and Heep, whose Stipendary I am."

With this, to my infinite surprise, he included us all in a comprehensive bow, and disappeared.

When the time expired, we all went out together to the old house.

We found Mr. Micawber at his desk, in the turret office on the ground floor, either writing, or pretending to write, hard. The large office-ruler was stuck into his waistcoat.

"Is Miss Wickfield at home?" said I.

"Mr. Wickfield is unwell in bed, sir, of a rheumatic fever," he returned; "but Miss Wickfield, I have no doubt, will be happy to see old friends. Will you walk in, sir?"

He preceded us to the dining-room—the first room I had entered in that house—and flinging open the door of Mr. Wickfield's former office, said, in a sonorous voice:

"Miss Trotwood, Mr. David Copperfield, Mr. Thomas Traddles, and Mr. Dixon!"

Uriah was astonished to see us. "Well, I am sure," he said, "this is indeed an unexpected pleasure!"

Agnes was now ushered in by Mr. Micawber. In the meanwhile, some slight sign passed between Mr. Micawber and Traddles; and Traddles, unobserved except by me, went out.

"Don't wait, Micawber," said Uriah.

Mr. Micawber, with his hand upon the ruler in his breast, stood erect before the door, most unmistakably contemplating one of his fellow-men, and that man his employer.

"What are you waiting for?" said Uriah. "Micawber! did you hear me tell you not to wait?"

"Yes!" replied the immovable Mr. Micawber.

"Then why do you wait?" said Uriah.

"Because I—in short, choose," replied Mr. Micawber, with a burst.

Uriah's cheeks lost colour, and an unwholesome paleness, still faintly tinged by his pervading red, overspread them.

"(You are a dissipated fellow, as all the world knows," he said, with an effort at a smile, "and I am afraid you'll oblige me to get rid of you. Go along! I'll talk to you presently.")

"If there is a scoundrel on this earth," said Mr. Micawber, suddenly breaking out again with the utmost vehemence, "with whom I have already talked too much, that scoundrel's name is—HEEP!"

Uriah fell back, as if he had been struck or stung. Looking slowly round upon us with the darkest and wickedest expression that his face could wear, he said, in a lower voice :

"Oho! This is a conspiracy! You have met here by appointment! Now, take care. You'll make nothing of this. Miss Trotwood, you had better stop this. Miss Wickfield, if you have any love for your father, you had better not join that gang. I'll ruin him, if you do. (Now, come! I have got some of you under the harrow. Think twice, you, Micawber, if you don't want to be crushed. Where's mother?)" he said, suddenly appearing to notice, with alarm, the absence of Traddles, and pulling down the bell-rope. "Fine doings in a person's own house!"

"Mrs. Heep is here, sir," said Traddles, returning with that worthy mother of a worthy son. "I have taken the liberty of making myself known to her."

"Who are you to make yourself known?" retorted Uriah. "And what do you want here?"

("I am the agent and friend of Mr. Wickfield, sir," said Traddles, in a composed business-like way. "And I have a power of attorney from him in my pocket, to act for him in all matters.")

("The old ass has drunk himself into a stage of dotage," said Uriah, turning uglier than before. "and it has been got from him by fraud!")

"Something has been got from him by fraud. I know," returned Traddles quietly; "and so do

you, Mr. Heep. We will refer that question, if you please, to Mr. Micawber."

"Ury—!" Mrs. Heep began, with an anxious gesture.

"You hold your tongue, mother," he returned; "least said, soonest mended."

"But, my Ury—"

"Will you hold your tongue, mother, and leave it to me?"

Mr. Micawber, whose impetuosity I had restrained thus far with the greatest difficulty, now burst forward, drew the ruler from his breast (apparently as a defensive weapon), and produced from his pocket a foolscap document, folded in the form of a large letter. Opening this packet, with his old flourish, and glancing at the contents, as if he cherished an artistic admiration of their style of composition, he began to read as follows:—

"Dear Miss Trotwood and gentlemen,

In appearing before you to denounce probably the most consummate Villain that has ever existed, I ask no consideration for myself. (The victim, from my cradle, of pecuniary liabilities to which I have been unable to respond, I have ever been the sport and toy of debasing circumstances.) Ignominy, Want, Despair and Madness have, collectively or separately, been the attendants of my career.)

In an accumulation of Ignominy, Want,

Despair, and Madness, I entered ~~the~~ office—or, as our lively neighbour the Gaul would term it, the Bureau—of the Firm, nominally conducted under the appellation of Wickfield and—HEEP, but, in reality, wielded by—HEEP alone.

The stipendiary emoluments in consideration of which I entered into the service of—HEEP, (Mr. Micawber always paused before that word and uttered it with astonishing vigour) were not defined, beyond the pittance of twenty-two shillings and six per week. The rest was left contingent on the value of my professional exertions. Need I say that it soon became necessary for me to solicit from—HEEP—pecuniary advances towards the support of Mrs. Micawber, and our blighted but rising family? Need I say that this necessity had been foreseen by—HEEP?

I found that my services were constantly called into requisition for the falsification of business, and the mystification of an individual whom I will designate as Mr. W., that Mr. W. was imposed upon, kept in ignorance and deluded in every possible way; yet, that all this while, the ruffian—HEEP—was professing unbounded gratitude to, and unbounded friendship for, that much-abused gentleman.

Stimulated by the silent monitor within, and by a no less touching and appealing monitor without

—to whom I will briefly refer as Miss W.—I entered on a not unlaborious task of clandestine investigation, protracted now, to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief, over a period exceeding twelve calendar months.)

My charges against—HEEP are as follows :

First. (When Mr. W.'s faculties and memory for business became weakened, he obtained Mr. W.'s signature under such circumstances to documents of importance, representing them to be other documents of no importance.) He induced Mr. W. to empower him to draw out, thus, one particular sum of trust-money, amounting to twelve six fourteen, two and nine, and employed it to meet pretended business charges and deficiencies which were either already provided for, or had never really existed."

" Ury, Ury! Be umble, and make terms, my dear!" screamed Mrs. Heep.

" Mother!" Heep retorted, " will you keep quiet? You're in a fright, and don't know what you say or mean. Uumble!" he repeated, looking at me, with a snarl, " I've umbled some of 'em for a pretty long time back, umble as I was!"

Mr. Micawber, genteelly adjusting his chin in his cravat, presently proceeded with his composition :

" Second. HEEP has, on several occasions, to

the best of my knowledge, information, and belief, systematically forged, to various entries, books, and documents, the signature of Mr. W.; and has distinctly done so in one instance, capable of proof by me."

"Ury, Ury!" cried the mother, "be umble and make terms. I know my son will be umble, gentlemen, if you'll give him time to think. Mr. Copperfield, I'm sure you know that he was always very umble, sir!"

Mr. Micawber continued:

"Third. And last. Mr. W. has been for years deluded and plundered, in every conceivable manner, to the pecuniary aggrandisement of the avaricious, false, and grasping—HEEP. His last act, completed but a few months since, was to induce Mr. W. to execute a relinquishment of his share in the partnership, and even a bill of sale on the very furniture of his house, in consideration of a certain annuity, to be well and truly paid by—HEEP.

I have now concluded. It merely remains for me to substantiate these accusations; and then, with my ill-starred family, to disappear from the landscape on which we appear to be an incumbrance.

Remaining always, &c. &c.,

WILKINS MICAWBER."

Much affected, but still intensely enjoying himself, Mr. Micawber folded up his letter, and handed it with a bow to my aunt, as something she might like to keep.

There was, as I had noticed on my first visit long ago, an iron safe in the room. The key was in it. A hasty suspicion seemed to strike Uriah; and, with a glance at Mr. Micawber, he went to it, and threw the doors clanking open. It was empty!

"Where are the books?" he cried, with a frightful face. "Some thief has stolen the books!"

Mr. Micawber tapped himself with the ruler. "I did, when I got the key from you as usual—but a little earlier—and opened it this morning."

"Don't be uneasy," said Traddles. "They have come into my possession. I will take care of them, under the authority I mentioned."

"You receive stolen goods, do you?" cried Uriah.

"Under such circumstances," answered Traddles, "yes."

What was my astonishment when I beheld my aunt, who had been profoundly quiet and attentive, make a dart at Uriah Heep, and seize him by the collar with both hands!

"You know what I want?" said my aunt.

"A strait-waistcoat," said he.

“No. My property!” returned my aunt. “Agnes, my dear, as long as I believed it had been really made away with by your father, I wouldn’t—and, my dear, I didn’t, even to Trot, as he knows—breathe a syllable of its having been placed here for investment. But now I know this fellow’s answerable for it, and I’ll have it! Trot, come and take it away from him!”

I hastened to put myself between them, and to assure her that we would all take care that he should make the utmost restitution of everything he had wrongly got.

During the last few minutes, Mrs. Heep had been clamouring to her son to be “unble”; and had been going down on her knees to all of us in succession, and making the wildest promises. Her son sat her down in his chair.

“What must be done,” said Traddles, “is this. First, the deed of relinquishment, that we have heard of, must be given over to me now—here. Heep, you must prepare to disgorge all that your rapacity has become possessed of, and to make restoration to the last farthing. All the partnership books and papers must remain in our possession; all your books and papers; all money accounts and securities, of both kinds. In short, everything here.”

“ Must it? I don’t know that,” said Uriah.
 “ I must have time to think about that.”

“ Certainly,” replied Traddles; “ but, in the meanwhile, and until everything is done to our satisfaction, we shall maintain possession of these things; and beg you—in short, compel you—to keep your own room, and hold no communication with any one.”

“ I won’t do it!” said Uriah, with an oath.

“(Maidstone Jail is a safer place of detention,” observed Traddles. “ Copperfield, will you go round to the Guildhall, and bring a couple of officers?”)

Here, Mrs. Heep broke out again, crying on her knees to Agnes to interfere in their behalf, exclaiming that he was very humble. (Uriah was a coward, from head to foot; and showed his dastardly nature through his sullenness and mortification, as much as at any time of his mean life.) He growled, “ Mother, hold your noise. Well! Let ’em have that deed. Go and fetch it!”

She soon returned not only with the deed, but also with the box in which it was, where we found a banker’s book and some other papers that were afterwards serviceable.

“ Good!” said Traddles, when this was brought. “ Now, Mr. Heep, you can retire to, think.”

Mr. Micawber's work was finished, and he returned home, followed by Mr. Dick, my aunt and myself. We were all very grateful for what he had done. (As this meant the loss of his appointment under Heep, our hearts were filled with sympathy for his family. My aunt now suggested that he should migrate to Australia to try his luck.)

"Capital, madam, capital," urged Mr. Micawber, gloomily.

"That is the principal—I may say the only—difficulty, my dear Mr. Copperfield," assented his wife.

"Capital?" cried my aunt. "But you are doing us a great service—have done us a great service, I may say, for surely much will come out of the fire—and what could we do for you, that would be half so good as to find the capital?"

"I could not receive it as a gift," said Mr. Micawber, full of fire and animation, "but if a sufficient sum could be advanced, say at five per cent. interest per annum, upon my personal liability—say my notes of hand, at twelve, eighteen, and twenty-four months, respectively, to allow time for something to turn up——"

"Could be? Can be and shall be, on your own terms," returned my aunt, "if you say the word."

“ There is but one question, my dear ma’am, I could wish to ask,” said Mrs. Micawber. “ The climate, I believe, is healthy?”

“ Finest in the world!” said my aunt.

“ Just so,” returned Mrs. Micawber. “ Then my question arises. (Now, *are* the circumstances of the country such, that a man of Mr. Micawber’s abilities would have a fair chance of rising in the social scale?) I will not say, at present, might he aspire to be Governor, or anything of that sort; but would there be a reasonable opening for his talents to develop themselves—that would be amply sufficient—and find their own expansion?”

“ No better opening anywhere,” said my aunt, “ for a man who conducts himself well, and is industrious.”

“ For a man who conducts himself well,” repeated Mrs. Micawber, with her clearest business manner, “ and is industrious. Precisely. It is evident to me that Australia is the legitimate sphere of action for Mr. Micawber.”

“ I entertain the conviction, my dear madam,” said Mr. Micawber, “ that it is, under existing circumstances, the land, the only land, for myself and family; and that something of an extraordinary nature will turn up on that shore.”

This conviction gradually gained ground, and

Mr. Micawber prepared to sail for Australia with his family at the earliest opportunity.

CHAPTER XVIII

Soon after this Dora's illness grew serious, and I returned to London. Gradually I despaired of ever seeing my child-wife running in the sunlight with her old friend Jip. But I could not shut out a lingering shadow of belief that she might be spared. At last they told me everything, and I knew that Dora would soon leave me. At her earnest desire I sent for Agnes, with whom she spent her last moments. It was from Agnes that I learnt that it was all over with her.

I came to think that the Future was walled up before me, that the energy and action of my life were at an end, that I never could find any refuge but in the grave. I was to go abroad. That seemed to have been determined among us from the first, on the advice of Agnes whose spirit pervaded all we thought. I waited only for what Mr. Micawber called the "final pulverisation of Heep," and for the departure of the emigrants for Australia. Soon we came to Canterbury to meet Traddles.

Uriah was held in safe-keeping by Traddles and later by Dick, while an investigation into his fraudulent transactions proceeded. Mr. Micawber

greatly helped Traddles in examining the financial condition of Mr. Wickfield, which was really chaotic.

"Now, let me see," said Traddles, looking among the papers one day. "Having counted our funds, and reduced to order a great mass of unintentional confusion in the first place, and of wilful confusion and falsification in the second, we take it to be clear that Mr. Wickfield might now wind up his business, and his agency-trust, and exhibit no deficiency or defalcation whatever."

"Oh, thank Heaven!" cried Agnes, fervently.

"But," said Traddles, "the surplus that would be left as his means of support—and I suppose the house to be sold, even in saying this—would be so small, not exceeding in all probability some hundreds of pounds, that perhaps, Miss Wickfield, it would be best to consider whether he might not retain his agency of the estate to which he has so long been receiver."

"I have considered it, Trotwood," said Agnes, looking to me, "and I feel that it ought not to be, and must not be. I have always aspired, if I could have released him from the toils in which he was held, to render back some little portion of the love and care I owe him, and to devote my life to him. It has been, for years, the utmost height of my hopes. To take our future on myself, will be the

next great happiness—the next to his release from all trust and responsibility—that I can know.”

“Have you thought how, Agnes?” I said.

“Often! I am not afraid, dear Trotwood. I am certain of success. So many people know me here, and think kindly of me, that I am certain. Don’t mistrust me. Our wants are not many. If I rent the dear old house, and keep a school, I shall be useful and happy.”

“Next, Miss ‘Trotwood,’” said Traddles. “That property of yours.”

“Well, sir,” sighed my aunt. (“All I have got to say about it is, that if it’s gone, I can bear it; and if it’s not gone, I shall be glad to get it back.”)

“It was originally, I think, eight thousand pounds, Consols?” said Traddles.

“Right!” replied my aunt.

“I can’t account for more than five,” said Traddles, with an air of perplexity.

“—thousand, do you mean?” inquired my aunt, with uncommon composure, “or pounds?”

“Five thousand pounds,” said Traddles.

“It was all there was,” returned my aunt. “I sold three, myself. One I paid for your articles, Trot, my dear; and the other two I have by me.”

“Then I am delighted to say,” cried Traddles,

beaming with joy, "that we have recovered the whole money!"

"How so, sir?" exclaimed my aunt.

"You believed it had been misappropriated by Mr. Wickfield?" said Traddles.

"Of course I did," said my aunt, "and was therefore easily silenced."

"And indeed," said Traddles, "it was sold, by virtue of the power of management he held from you; but I needn't say by whom sold, or on whose actual signature. It was afterwards pretended to Mr. Wickfield, by that rascal,—and proved, too, by figures,—that he had possessed himself of the money (on general instructions, *he* said) to keep other deficiencies and difficulties from the light."

"Ha!" said my aunt, knitting her brows thoughtfully, and glancing at Agnes. "And what's become of him?"

"I don't know. He left here," said Traddles, "with his mother, who had been clamouring, and beseeching, and disclosing, the whole time. They went away by one of the London night coaches, and I know no more about him."

"Do you suppose he has any money, Traddles?" I asked.

"Oh dear, yes, I should think so," he replied, shaking his head, seriously. "I should say he must have pocketed a good deal, in one way or

other. But I think you would find, Copperfield, if you had an opportunity of observing his course, that money would never keep that man out of mischief."

(Soon after the Micawbers' departure for Australia, I left England, and for many months travelled with an ever-darkening cloud upon my mind. Sometimes, I proceeded restlessly from place to place, stopping nowhere; sometimes, I lingered long in one spot. I had no purpose, no sustaining soul within me, anywhere.)

I was now in a valley in Switzerland. I had come out of Italy, over one of the great passes of the Alps, and had since wandered with a guide among the by-ways of the mountains. (If those awful solitudes had spoken to my heart, I did not know it. I had found sublimity and wonder in the dread heights and precipices, in the roaring torrents, and the wastes of ice and snow; but as yet, they had taught me nothing else.)

One evening I opened a packet of letters which had been awaiting me for some time, and read the writing of Agnes. She was happy and useful, and was prospering as she had hoped.

She gave me no advice; she urged no duty on me; she only told me, in her own fervent manner, what her trust in me was. (She knew (she said) how such a nature as mine would turn affliction to good.

I read her letter, many times. I wrote to her before I slept. I told her that I had been in sore need of her help; that without her I was not, and I never had been, what she thought me.

I resolved to remain away from home for some time longer; to settle myself for the present in Switzerland; to resume my pen; to work.

I worked early and late, patiently and hard. I wrote a Story, with a purpose growing, not remotely, out of my experience, and sent it to Traddles. He arranged for its publication very advantageously for me; and the tidings of my growing reputation began to reach me from travellers whom I encountered by chance. After some rest and change, I fell to work, in my old ardent way, on a new fancy, which took strong possession of me. As I advanced in the execution of this task, I thought of returning home.

CHAPTER XIX

I landed in London on a wintry autumn evening. It was dark and raining, and I saw more fog and mud in a minute than I had seen in a year.

For some changes in the fortunes of my friends, I was prepared. My aunt had long been re-established at Dover, and Traddles had begun to get into some little practice at the Bar, in the very first

term after "my departure. He had chambers in Gray's Inn, now.

"Good God!" cried Traddles, looking up as I stepped into his room, "it's Copperfield!", and rushed into my arms, where I held him tight.

"All well, my dear Traddles?"

"All well, my dear, dear Copperfield, and nothing but good news!"

We cried with pleasure, both of us.

"To think," said Traddles, "that you should have been so nearly coming home as you must have been, my dear old boy, and not at the ceremony!"

"What ceremony, my dear Traddles?"

"Why, my dear Copperfield," said Traddles, sticking his hair upright with both hands, and then putting his hands on my knees, "I am married!"

"Married!" I cried joyfully.

"Lord bless me, yes!" said Traddles, "by the Rev. Horace—to Sophy—down in Devonshire. Why, my dear boy, she's behind the window curtain! Look here!"

To my amazement, the dearest girl in the world came at that same instant, laughing and blushing, from her place of concealment.

It was a scene I could not help dwelling on with pleasure for a long time after I left.) Traddles' happiness often led me to think gloomily of the vicissitudes and separations that had marked my

life. The memory of my miserable childhood was one day unexpectedly revived.

Mr. Chillip, the Doctor who attended my mother in her first confinement, had left Blunderstone six or seven years ago, and I had never seen him since. I now met him one day, placidly perusing the newspaper in a London coffee-room, with his little head on one side, and a glass of warm sherry negus at his elbow.

I walked up to where he was sitting, and said, "How do you do, Mr. Chillip?"

"Dear me, sir!" said Mr. Chillip, surveying me with his head on one side. "And it's Mr. Copperfield, is it? Well, sir, I think I should have known you, if I had taken the liberty of looking more closely at you."

"I was aware that you sustained a bereavement, sir, some time ago," continued Mr. Chillip. "I heard it from your father-in-law's sister. Very decided character there, sir?"

"Why, yes," said I, "decided enough. Where did you see her, Mr. Chillip?"

"Are you not aware, sir?" returned Mr. Chillip, with his placidest smile, "that your father-in-law is again a neighbour of mine?"

No," said I.

"He is indeed, sir!" said Mr. Chillip. "Married a young lady of that part, with a very good little property, poor thing."

"I was aware of his being married again. Do you attend the family?" I asked.

("Not regularly: I have been called in," he replied. "Strong phrenological development of the organ of firmness, in Mr. Murdstone and his sister, sir.")

"And the brother and sister are pursuing their old course, are they?" said I.

"I must say, they are very severe, sir, both as to this life and the next."

"The next will be regulated without much reference to them, I dare say," I returned: "what are they doing as to this?"

Mr. Chillip shook his head, stirred his negus, and sipped it.

"She was a charming woman, sir!" he observed in a plaintive manner.

"The present Mrs. Murdstone?"

"A charming woman indeed, sir," said Mr. Chillip; "as amiable, I am sure, as it was possible to be! Mrs. Chillip's opinion is, that her spirit has been entirely broken since her marriage, and that she is all but melancholy mad. And the ladies," observed Mr. Chillip, timorously, "are great observers, sir."

" I suppose she was to be subdued and broken to their detestable mould, Heaven help her ! " said I. " And she has been."

" Well, sir, there were violent quarrels at first, I assure you," said Mr. Chillip; " but she is quite a shadow now. Would it be considered forward if I was to say to you, sir, in confidence, that since the sister came to help, the brother and sister between them have nearly reduced her to a state of imbecility ?"

I told him I could easily believe it.

" I have no hesitation in saying," said Mr. Chillip, fortifying himself with another sip of negus, " between you and me, sir, that her mother died of it—or that tyranny, gloom, and worry have made Mrs. Murdstone nearly imbecile. She was a lively young woman, sir, before marriage, and their gloom and austerity destroyed her. They go about with her, now, more like her keepers than her husband and sister-in-law. That was Mrs. Chillip's remark to me, only last week. And I assure you, sir, the ladies are great observers. Mrs. Chillip," he proceeded, in the calmest and slowest manner, " quite electrified me, by pointing out that Mr. Murdstone sets up an image of himself, and calls it the Divine Nature. (Mr. Murdstone delivers public addresses sometimes, and it is said,—in short, sir, it is said by Mrs. Chillip,—

that the darker tyrant he has lately been, the more ferocious is his doctrine.”)

“ I believe Mrs. Chillip to be perfectly right,” said I.

“ Mrs. Chillip does go so far as to say,” pursued the meekest of little men, much encouraged, “ that what such people miscall their religion, is a vent for their bad humours and arrogance.”

I left for Dover next morning. My aunt and I, when we were left alone, talked far into the night. She told me how the emigrants never wrote home, otherwise than cheerfully and hopefully, and how Mr. Micawber had actually remitted divers small sums of money, on account of those “ pecuniary liabilities,” in reference to which he had been so business-like as between man and man.

“ And when, Trot,” said my aunt, patting the back of my hand, as we sat in our old way before the fire, “ when are you going over to Canterbury? ”

“ I shall get a horse, and ride over to-morrow morning, aunt, unless you will go with me.”

“ No! ” said my aunt, in her short, abrupt way. “ I mean to stay where I am.”

“ Then, I should ride,” I said.

I rode away, early in the morning, for the scene of my old school days.

The well-remembered ground was soon traversed, and I came into the quiet streets, where every stone was a boy's book to me.) I went on foot to the old house, and requested the new maid who admitted me, to tell Miss Wickfield that a gentleman who waited on her from a friend abroad, was there; and I was shown up the grave old staircase into the unchanged drawing-room. Everything was as it used to be in the happy time.

The opening of the little door made me start and turn. Her beautiful serene eyes met mine as she came towards me. She stopped and laid her hand upon her bosom.

"Agnes! my dear girl! I have come too suddenly upon you."

"No, no! I am so rejoiced to see you, Trotwood!"

"Dear Agnes, the happiness it is to me, to see you once again!"

She was so true, she was so beautiful, she was so good,—I owed her so much gratitude, she was so dear to me, that I could find no utterance for what I felt. I tried to bless her, tried to thank her, tried to tell her (as I had often done in letters) what an influence she had upon me; but all my efforts were in vain. My love and joy were dumb.

“ And you, Agnes,” I said, by-and-bye. “ Tell-me of yourself. You have hardly ever told me of your own life, in all this lapse of time ! ”

“ What should I tell ? ” she answered, with her radiant smile. “ Papa is well. You see us here, quiet in our own home ; our anxieties set at rest, our home restored to us : and knowing that, dear Trotwood, you know all.”

Agnes had to leave me for a while in order to attend to her duties at the school she had been keeping.

Soon I met Mr. Wickfield who had come home from a garden he had out of town, where he now employed himself almost every day. He seemed but the shadow of his handsome picture on the wall. As I rode back in the lone night, the wind going by me like a restless memory, I feared Agnes was not happy. And I was not happy.

CHAPTER XX

“ I have a letter from old Creakle here,” said I one day to Traddles in his London house.

“ From Creakle the schoolmaster ? ” exclaimed Traddles. “ No ! ”

“ Among the persons who are attracted to me in my rising fame and fortune,” said I, looking over my letters. “ and who discover that they were always much attached to me, is the self-same

Creakle. He is not a schoolmaster now, Traddles. He is retired. He is a Middlesex Magistrate."

I thought Traddles might be surprised to hear it, but he was not so at all.

I continued, "He writes to me here, that he will be glad to show me, in operation, the only true system of prison discipline; the only unchallengeable way of making sincere and lasting converts and penitents—which, you know, is by solitary confinement. What do you say?"

"To the system?" inquired Traddles, looking grave.

"No. To my accepting the offer, and your going with me?"

"I don't object," said Traddles.

"Then I'll write to say so. You remember our treatment at his hands?"

"Perfectly," said Traddles.

"Yet, if you'll read his letter, you'll find he is the tenderest of men to prisoners convicted of the whole calendar of felonies," said I; "though I can't find that his tenderness extends to any other class of created beings."

We arranged the time of our visit, and I wrote accordingly to Mr. Creakle that evening.

On the appointed day Traddles and I repaired to the prison, where Mr. Creakle was powerful. It was an immense and solid building, erected at a

vast expense. In the office we were introduced to our old schoolmaster, who was one of a group composed of two or three of the busier sort of magistrates, and some visitors they had brought.

He received me like a man who had formed my mind in bygone years, and had always loved me tenderly. On my introducing Traddles, Mr. Creakle expressed, in like manner, but in an inferior degree, that he had always been Traddles's guide, philosopher, and friend. Our venerable instructor was a great deal older, and not improved in appearance. His face was as fiery as ever.

After some conversation among these gentlemen, from which I might have supposed that there was nothing in the world to be legitimately taken into account but the supreme comfort of prisoners, at any expense, and nothing on the wide earth to be done outside prison-doors, we began our inspection. It being then just dinner-time, we went first into the great kitchen, where every prisoner's dinner was in course of being set out separately (to be handed to him in his cell), with the regularity and precision of clock-work. I learned that the "system" required high living.

As we were going through some of the magnificent passages, I inquired of Mr. Creakle and his friends what were supposed to be the main advantages of this all-governing and universally over-

riding system? I found them to be the perfect isolation of prisoners—so that no one man in confinement there, knew anything about another—and the reduction of prisoners to a wholesome state of mind, leading to sincere contrition and repentance.

I found a vast amount of profession, varying very little in character: varying very little (which I thought exceedingly suspicious) even in words. Above all, I found that the most professing men were the greatest objects of interest; and that their conceit, their vanity, their want of excitement, and their love of deception (which many of them possessed to an almost incredible extent, as their histories showed), all prompted these professions, and were all gratified by them.

However, I heard so repeatedly, in the course of our goings to and fro, of a certain Number Twenty Seven, who was the favourite, and who really appeared to be a Model Prisoner, that I resolved to suspend my judgment until I should see Twenty Seven. I heard so much of Twenty Seven, of his pious admonitions to everybody around him, and of the beautiful letters he constantly wrote to his mother (whom he seemed to consider in a very bad way), that I became quite impatient to see him.

I had to restrain my impatience for some time, on account of Twenty Seven being reserved for a

concluding effect. But at last we came to the door of his cell; and Mr. Creakle, looking through a little hole in it, reported to us, in a state of the greatest admiration, that he was reading a Hymn Book.

There was such a rush of heads immediately, to see Number Twenty Seven reading his Hymn Book, that the little hole was blocked up, six or seven heads deep. To remedy this inconvenience, and give us an opportunity of conversing with Twenty Seven in all his purity, Mr. Creakle directed the door of the cell to be unlocked, and Twenty Seven to be invited out into the passage. This was done; and whom should Traddles and I then behold, to our amazement, in this converted Number Twenty Seven, but **URIAH HEEP!**

He knew us directly; and said, as he came out —with the old writhe,—

“ How do you do, Mr. Copperfield? How do you do, Mr. Traddles?”

This recognition caused a general admiration in the party. I rather thought that every one was struck by his not being proud, and taking notice of us.

“ Well, Twenty Seven,” said Mr. Creakle, mournfully admiring him. “ How do you find yourself to-day?”

“ I am very umble, sir!” replied Uriah Heep.

"You are always so, Twenty Seven," said Mr. Creakle.

Here, another gentleman asked, with extreme anxiety, "Are you quite comfortable?"

"Yes, I thank you, sir!" said Uriah Heep, looking in that direction. "Far more comfortable here, than ever I was outside. I see my follies now, sir. That's what makes me comfortable."

Several gentlemen were much affected; and a third questioner, forcing himself to the front, inquired with extreme feeling, "How do you find the beef?"

"Thank you, sir," replied Uriah, glancing in the new direction of this voice, "it was tougher yesterday than I could wish; but it's my duty to bear. I have committed follies, gentlemen," said Uriah, looking round with a meek smile, "and I ought to bear the consequences without repining."

"You are quite changed?" said Mr. Creakle.

"Oh dear, yes, sir!" cried this hopeful penitent.

"You wouldn't relapse, if you were going out?" asked somebody else.

"Oh de-ar no, sir!"

"Well!" said Mr. Creakle, "this is very gratifying. You have addressed Mr. Copperfield, Twenty Seven. Do you wish to say anything further to him?"

"You knew me a long time before I came here and, was changed, Mr. Copperfield," said Uriah, looking at me; and a more villainous look I never saw, even on his visage. "You knew me when, in spite of my follies, I was umble among them that was proud, and meek among them that was violent—you was violent to me yourself, Mr. Copperfield. Once, you struck me a blow in the face, you know."

General commiseration. Several indignant glances directed at me.

"But I forgive you, Mr. Copperfield," said Uriah, making his forgiving nature the subject of a most impious and awful parallel, which I shall not record.) "I forgive everybody. It would ill become me to bear malice. I freely forgive you, and I hope you'll curb your passions in future. I hope Mr. W. will repent, and Miss W., and all of that sinful lot. You've been visited with affliction, and I hope it may do you good; but you'd better have come here. Mr. W. had better have come here, and Miss W. too. The best wish I could give you, Mr. Copperfield, and give all of you gentlemen, is, that you could be took up and brought here. When I think of my past follies, and my present state, I am sure it would be best for you. I pity all who ain't brought here!"

He sneaked back into his cell, amidst a little chorus of approbation; and both Traddles and I experienced a great relief when he was locked in.

“Do you know,” said I to a Warder as we walked along the passage, “what felony was Number Twenty Seven’s last ‘folly’?”

The answer was that it was a Bank case.

“A fraud on the Bank of England?” I asked.

“Yes, sir. Fraud, forgery, and conspiracy. He and some others. He set the others on. It was a deep plot for a large sum. Sentence, transportation for life.”

CHAPTER XXI

I took up my abode in my aunt’s house at Dover, and occasionally went to London to consult Traddles on business matters. He had managed for me, in my absence, with the soundest judgment; and my worldly affairs were prospering.

I had been at home about two months. I had seen Agnes frequently.

It was a cold harsh winter day when I rode to Canterbury this time. I found Agnes alone. Having welcomed me as usual, she took her work-basket and sat in one of the old-fashioned windows.

I sat beside her on the window-seat. As I looked at her beautiful face, observant of her work,

she raised her mild clear eyes, and saw that I was looking at her.

“ You are thoughtful to-day, Trotwood ! ”

“ Agnes, shall I tell you what about ? I came to tell you.”

She put aside her work, as she used to do when we were seriously discussing anything ; and gave me her whole attention.

“ My dear Agnes, do you doubt my being true to you ? ”

“ No ! ” she answered, with a look of astonishment.

“ Agnes ! Ever my guide and best support ! If you had been more mindful of yourself, and less of me, when we grew up here together, I think my heedless fancy never would have wandered from you. When I loved Dora—fondly, Agnes, as you know——”

“ Yes ! ” she cried, earnestly. “ I am glad to know it ! ”

“ When I loved her—even then, my love would have been incomplete, without your sympathy. I had it, and it was perfected. And when I lost her, Agnes, what should I have been without you, still ! I went away, dear Agnes, loving you. I stayed away, loving you. I returned home, loving you ! ”

And now, I tried to tell her of the struggle I

had had, and the conclusion I had come to. I also tried to lay my mind before her, truly and entirely. If she did so love me (I said) that she could take me for her husband, she could do so, on no deserving of mine, except upon the truth of my love for her.

"I am so blest, Trotwood—my heart is so overcharged—but there is one thing I must say."

"Dearest, what?"

She laid her gentle hands upon my shoulders, and looked calmly in my face.

"Do you know, yet, what it is?"

"I am afraid to speculate on what it is. Tell me, my dear."

"I have loved you all my life!"

We were married within a fortnight. Traddles and Sophy, and Doctor and Mrs. Strong, were the only guests at our quiet wedding. We left them full of joy, and drove away together.

"Dearest husband!" said Agnes. "Now that I may call you by that name, I have one thing more to tell you."

"Let me hear it."

"It grows out of the night when Dora died. She sent you for me."

"She did."

"She told me that she left me something. Can you think what it was?"

I believed I could.

“ She told me that she made a last request to me, and left me a last charge.”

“ And it was——”

“ That only I would occupy this vacant place.”

And Agnes wept; and I wept with her, though we were so happy.

